

## IV Intellectual Defence 1: Criticism of the

### Isma'iliyya

#### 1 Earlier Refutations of the Isma'iliyya

##### 1.1 Earlier Refutations of the Isma'iliyya Cited in the *!thbat*

###### Introduction

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah was in good company. The Isma'ili threat from without and within the 'Abbasid caliphate provoked a harsh reaction from various Islamic groups fighting Isma'ilism with polemics. Samuel Stern describes the anti-Isma'ili activities as a true "campaign conducted in an unscrupulous way". A symbol of this campaign became the Baghdad manifesto of 402/1011 promoted by the 'Abbasid caliph al-Qadir (r. 381/991-422/1031), in which he accused the Fatimids of forging of their 'Alid ancestry and condemned Isma'ilis as enemies of Islam. The leading scholars were forced to sign the manifesto. Furthermore, the caliph commissioned intellectuals to write refutations of the Isma'iliyya, of which 'All b. Sa'id al-Istakhri (d. 403/1013) and Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013)" are only two examples. Other writers from various religious affiliations and geographical destinations felt compelled to compose refutations of the Isma'iliyya in those days.

In his presentation, al-Mu'ayyad could draw on earlier anti-Isma'ili writings. He mentions four authors by name - Abu Zayd al-'Alawi, Ibn Qiba al-Razi, Ibn Rizam and Ibn 'Abdak - and refers to others in general: "f-J shuyukhund (rahima-hum Allah) min al-ashrdfwa-l- 'ulamd"\ In the following I will gather the available information on the cited authors and their books, all of which are lost. Then, additional anti-Isma'ili texts that could have served al-Mu'ayyad as a source are listed.

###### Abu Zayd al-'Alawi (d. 326/937-8)

The first author mentioned is Abu Zayd 'Isa b. Muhammad al-'Alawi al-Husayni (d. 326/937-8). He was a Shi'ite theologian and important hadith transmitter from Rayy. Al-Mu'ayyad identifies him as a Sharif, thus expressing that his genealogical links trace back to the Prophet Muhammad, via Imam Zayd b. 'All, the great-grandson of 'All and Fatima and eponym of the Zaydiyya. In Kufa al-'Alawi studied with well-known Zaydi hadith transmitters, such as Ahmad b. 'Isa b. Zayd (d. 247/861) and Muhammad b. al-Mansur b. Yazid al-MurMi (d. 290/903)", who belongs to the tradition of Imam al-Qasim b. Ibrahim. Abu Zayd al-'Alawi also studied with Ahmad b. Sahl al-Razi (fl. end of 3rd/9th century), a Zaydi scholar and author of the historiographical work *AkhbdrFakhkh wa-khabar Yahyd b. 'Abd Alldh*, Abu 'Abd Allah al-Husayn b. 'Ali al-Misri (d. 320/932-3), the brother of

the Zaydi imam al-Nasir al-Utrush, and the Shafi'i traditionist Abu 'Awana al-Isfara'ini (d. 316/928-9) . One of al-'AlawI's students in the field of Shi'ite teachings was Abu l-'Abbas al-HasanI , who later instructed the two Haruni brothers. In his Kitdb Shark al-Ahkdm, al-HasanI transmitted many hadiths collected by his teacher Abu Zayd al-'AlawI/"

Al-'AlawI's refutation of the Isma'iliyya, which al-Mu'ayyad mentions in the Ithbdtj is not extant. Only a short passage referring to the Isma'iliyya found in al-'AlawI's Kitdb al-Ishhdd offers a rough idea of his preoccupation with their teachings. The Kitdb al-Ishhdd is a refutation of the Imamiyya and their doctrine of the occultation of the imam. In a passage on the disagreement among different Shi'ite sects concerning the identity of the imam, al-'Alawi lists the IsmdW-yya and the Qardmita with the following words:

"And these Fathites (al-Fathiyya) claimed the imamate for Ismail b. Ja'far through inheritance and will from his father, and before that, they maintained the imamate of 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far [al-Sadiq]. Today they are called the Ismaliyya because no one is left of those who believed in the imamate of Abd Allah b. Ja'far. A group of the Fathites who are called Qarmatians (al-Qaramita) maintain the imamate of Muhammad b. Ismail b. Ja'far through inheritance and will. Those people who stop with Musa b. Ja'far claim that the imamate belongs to Musa and are awaiting his return.

This rather general statement by al-'Alawi reflects the inner-Isma'ili differences regarding the succession in the imamate that existed at the time. The Fathiyya were a Shi'ite group that maintained that after Ja'far b. Sadiq the imamate belonged to Ja'far's eldest son 'Abd Allah/ After 'Abd Allah's death, most of the Fathites claimed the imamate for Ja'far's other son, Musa al-Kazim (as did the Imamis)/ According to al-'Alawi, apparently some of the former Fathites also joined the Isma'ilis. The Qaramita indeed believed in Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Ja'far, but they did not emerge as a subgroup from the Isma'ilis. In the Ithbdtj the question of the imamate plays only a marginal role. "

Ibn Qiba (d, before 319/931)

The second author referred to by al-Mu'ayyad is Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Qiba al-Razi. Ibn Qiba was a theologian, who was mostly active in Qum and died in Rayy before 319/931. There is not much information about his life, but the entries in some biographical dictionaries, including those of al-Najashi (d. 450/1058-59) and al-Tusi (d. 460/1067), inform us that Ibn Qiba was originally a Mu'tazili and later converted to Imamism. Ibn Qiba joined the Imamiyya at a time when philosophy-minded Shi'ite theologians had begun to introduce Mu'tazilite points of view into traditional Imami thinking. It seems he was one of the pioneers of a new school of Imami theology and actively engaged in sectarian debates. He is praised for his knowledge and erudition in the disciplines of kalām and hadith. Ibn Qiba's most important contribution was a refined theory of the imamate. He exchanged letters on the imamate with the Mu'tazili theologian

Abu l-Qasim al-Balkhi (d. after 350/962) and his ideas were discussed by Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar. "" As mentioned, al-Mu'ayyad wrote a refutation of Ibn Qiba which seems to have been lost.

The refutation of the Isma'iliyya referred to in the Ithbdt is not found in another reference. As was the case with al-'Alawi, we can only get a general idea of Ibn Qiba's critique of the Isma'ilis from a passage of his partially transmitted Naqd kitdb al-ishhdd li-Abi Zayd al-'Alawi:

"As for the Fathites (al-Fathiyya), the evidence against them is so clear that it cannot be concealed, for Ismail died before Abu Abd Allah [Ja'far al-Sadiq], and a dead person cannot succeed a living person; the only possibility is that a living person succeeds a dead person. However, the group blindly followed its leaders and turned away from the proofs. This matter does not need to be dwelt upon any further because it is obviously wrong and its shortcoming can clearly be noted.

As for the Qarmatians (al-Qaramita), they contradicted Islam, letter by letter, as they abolished the acts of the sharVa and brought all kinds of sophistry (safsata'iyya). The only need for an imam is for religion and the establishment of the rule of the sharVa. Then, if the Qarmatians come and claim that la'far b. Muhammad or his legatee appointed someone as his successor who called for the nullification of Islam and the sharVa and for leaving behind the normal behaviour of the members of the community, their own contradictions and vain contentions will be proof enough of their falsehood."

Ibn Qiba refers to the same two Isma'ili groups as al-'Alawi does, the difference being that he does not count the Qaramita among the Fathiyya. Critiques of the Qaramita include the abolishment of the law and Islam as a whole. These are common accusations addressed against the Isma'iliyya in anti-Isma'ili texts and they are likewise repeated by al-Mu'ayyad. Ibn Qiba's critique addressed against "all kinds of sophistry" introduced by the Qaramita, supposedly referred to the continuous effort on the part of contemporary Isma'ili theologians to reconcile Islamic doctrine with neoplatonic philosophy.

Ibn 'Abdak (d. after 360/971)

The third author cited by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah as having an anti-Isma'ili record is Abu Ahmad b. 'Abdak al-JurjM, whose full name is Abu Ahmad Muhammad b. 'Alib. 'Abdak al-JurjM. " Ibn 'Abdak was a theologian and hadith transmitter. The exact dates of his birth and death are not known, but he died after 360/971. Ibn 'Abdak came from Jurjan in the Caspian region, but travelled around during his education. He spent some time in Nisabur, where he met the traditionist Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Nisaburi (d. 405/1014). In 'Askar, he studied with Abu Hashim al-Jubba'i (d. 321/933). He then went to Isfahan to become a student of Muhammad b. Dawud al-Isfahani (d. 297/909), a jurist in the Zahirid school. In Balkh, he participated in the Majlis of Abu l-Qasim al-Balkhi and studied the ology ('ilm al-kalbm) with him. "" The sources, which mostly rely on reports by al-Hakim al-Nisaburi, describe him as an important ShI'ite personality (muqaddam al-shVa) in Jurjan and refer to him as "imam of the ShI'ites of his time" (imam ahl al-tashayyu' fi 'asrihi). It is not clear whether he exclusively adhered

to a specific Shi'ite branch. The references indicate both Imami and Zaydi affiliations. Al-Najashi and al-Tusi list him in their encyclopaedias of important Imami personalities. In contrast, the information provided by Abu Talib al-Natiq and 'Abd al-Jabbar primarily suggests a sympathy for Zaydi ideas. They explain that, with regards to the concepts of "promise and threat" (al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id) and "the intermediate position" (al-manzila bayna l-manzilatayn), Ibn 'Abdak held Mu'tazilite views that opposed well-known Imami ones. With regards to the concept of the imamate, 'Abd al-Jabbar states that Ibn 'Abdak was not clear and changed his opinion rather frequently. In addition, Ibn 'Abdak reported traditions from Zayn al-'Abidin and al-Nasir al-Utrush.

Ibn 'Abdak wrote many books in the fields of kalām.<sup>1</sup> Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah certainly refers to his Kitāb al-Radd 'alā l-Isma'īliyya, which also appears in al-Tusi's Fihrist and al-Mas'udi's Kitāb al-tanbih wa-l-ishrāf in a list of earlier refuters of Isma'ilism.<sup>2</sup> However, the text is not extant.

## Conclusion

Since the refutations of al-'Alawi, Ibn Qiba and Ibn 'Abdak are not available, a comparison to the Ithbāt and thus an answer regarding al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's adoptions is impossible. However, all three authors were distinguished scholars who composed theological works on different topics. Therefore, it is conceivable that their anti-Isma'ili refutations also contained serious theological examinations of Isma'ili thinking going beyond polemics, as those provided in the Ithbāt.<sup>3</sup> Before considering the fourth author cited, I will give an overview of further anti-Isma'ili writings that are not cited by al-Mu'ayyad. A closer comparison between some of these works and the refutations included in the Ithbāt - provided in chapter IV.2 - will show interesting parallels.

## 1.2 Other Anti-Isma'ili Texts and References

There are four other works with anti-Isma'ili content that are important to mention in our context, although al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah does not cite them, neither the titles nor the authors. I include them here, because they also refer to Ibn Rizām, the fourth author cited by al-Mu'ayyad, that will be discussed afterwards (pp. 48 ff.).

1) As mentioned above, first of all there is 'Abd al-Jabbar's Tathbit dā'id al-nubuwwa. In this text on proofs of prophecy 'Abd al-Jabbar included a refutation of the Isma'iliyya. The critical passages are distributed throughout the work, but the most consistent part is found at the end of the book.<sup>4</sup> There, 'Abd al-Jabbar is mainly concerned with the Qarmati movement, whose development he describes in detail, including the expansion in Bahrain<sup>5</sup>, Yemen<sup>6</sup>, the Maghreb<sup>7</sup> and the mission in the lands of Daylam<sup>8</sup>. The Fatimids, in contrast, are rarely mentioned.<sup>9</sup> Isma'ili doctrine is not refuted systematically, but is often included in a general refutation of Shi'ite dogmas with regards to the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and followers or the interpretation of his messages. 'Abd al-Jabbar's few explicit critiques of the Isma'ilis include the abuse of the Prophets (shatm al-anbiyā') the abolishment of the religious laws (ta'tu

al-shardTj) their fight against the Muslims ("qatalu ... al-muslimin"), "disgracing the Qur'an, the Torah and the Gospel by using them for ablution" (istanju bi-l-masdhifwa-l-tawrdt wa-l-injUy as well as the permission of unlawful deeds, such as drinking wine or adultery. " On this basis, the Isma'ilis are denounced in many passages as severe enemies of Islam.

' Abd al-Jabbar explicitly mentions that he wrote his work in the year 385/995. It is not certain whether 'Abd al-Jabbar's Tathbit or al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's Ithbdt was earlier. The fact that the Zaydi imam does not include the name of his teacher in the list of earlier authors of anti-Isma'ili refutations may indicate that al-Mu'ayyad wrote his text before 385/995. But he may simply have also not cited it in his list, because it is not a Radd 'aid l-Ismd'Uiyya. The refutation of the Isma'iliyya is only one of many topics in the Tathbit.

2) The next refutation was penned by another Zaydl disciple of 'Abd al-Jabbar: Abu l-Qasim al-Bustl. In his youth Abu l-Qasim al-Busti apparently spent some time in Gilan, where he joined the Zaydl school of the Ndsiriyya. It is also known that he visited Amul between 403/1012 and 411/1020-1. Stern's assumption that al-Busti might have been a companion of al-Mu'ayyad and a transmitter of his legal doctrine was corrected by Madelung, with reference to a confusion of names." Al-Bustfs refutation entitled Min kashf asrdr al-Bdtiniyya wa- 'awdr madhhabihim " is important, because it shows the considerable effort taken by the author to truly understand and present the Isma'ili doctrines in a precise way. He therefore used original Isma'ili texts, in particular the now lost Kitdb al-Mahsul of the Isma'ili missionary Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Nasafi (d. 332/943)." Al-Busti's Kashf is discussed below in more detail, since it exhibits interesting parallels with the Ithbdtj including the reproach of ta'tU (i.e. denying God all attributes), the abolishment of the religious duties and the negation of prophethood.

3) Another important reference is Abu Sa'id al-Muhsin b. Muhammad al-Hakim al-Jishumi (d. 494/1101) from Bayhaq in Khurasan. Al-Jishumi was an active supporter of Mu'tazili theology in the tradition of 'Abd al-Jabbar. In legal questions he adhered to the HanafI school, before turning to Zaydism rather late in his life. Among others, he studied with Abu l-Hasan 'All b. 'Abd Allah (d. 457/1067), a student of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's brother Abu Talib al-Natiq. Al-Jishuml's theological summa Shark al-Vyun al-masd'iP is an autocommentary to his Kitdb Vyiin al-masd'il fi l-radd 'aid ahl al-bida \ It contains a detailed chapter on the Bdtiniyya that is divided into five paragraphs (fusul): beginning, mission, subgroups, strategies of their mission and teachings." Although al-Jishumi lived after al-Mu'ayyad, the information in his text is valuable for our analysis, since it contains considerable knowledge about Isma'ili theology. As a student of al-Natiq's disciple, al-Jishumi may have had similar sources about the Isma'iliyya at his disposal as al-Mu'ayyad.

4) Finally, late, but interesting is Rukn al-Din Mahmud b. Muhammad b. al-Malahimi (d. 536/1141), an important Mu'tazili, but not Zaydl scholar from Khurasan. " Ibn al-Malahimi adhered to the HanafI community, but was familiar with Zaydi literature. He is particularly known for his efforts to defend the theological teachings of Abu l-Husayn al-Basri (d. 436/1045), a student of 'Abd al-Jabbar against those of the Bahshamiyya. Ibn al-Malahiml's work Tuhfat al-mu-

takallimin fi radd 'aid l-faldsifa contains a separate chapter on the esoteric doctrine of the Bdtiniyyaj which is rejected as being largely based on the teachings and methods of the philosophers (the overall refutation of whom is the aim of the whole work). In his Kitdb al-Mu'tamad fi usul al-din , Ibn al-Malahimi refutes the Bdtiniyya in a similar way. Like al-Busti, Ibn al-Malahimi criticises the Isma'ili concepts in a theological discussion.

### 1.3 Ibn Rizam's Anti-Isma'ili Polemic

Now I would like to come back to the four authors cited by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah. The fourth one mentioned is Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'All b. Rizam al-Ta'i al-Kufi, who became widely known as Ibn Rizam. He lived in Baghdad and Kufa, the centre of the Qarmatian movement during the first half of the 4th/10th century. His companions and informants were members of the Qarmatian circles of Iraq, which is why one can assume that he was rather well informed about the internal development of the group. Nonetheless, his writings against the Isma'ilis appear to be rather polemical. They did not survive, but seem to have been accessible to generations of scholars and historians, who included passages from them in their own works. As far as we know, Ibn Rizam wrote several treatises that deal with the origin and history of Isma'ilism and aim at condemning it as a non-Islamic, even atheist, sect. The following synopsis of important extant fragments by later authors provides evidence thereof. It remains unclear whether they originally belonged to one or more texts by Ibn Rizam.

#### al-Mas'udT (d, 345/956)

The much-travelled historian 'All b. al-Husayn al-Mas'udi was aware of Ibn Rizam's refutations of the Qaramita, when he completed his Kitdb al-Tanbih wa-l-ishrdf shortly before his death. The work provides a universal history, including the history of Islam up to the reign of the ' Abbasid caliph al-Muti' li-llah (r. 334-363/946-974). In its longest part, the book presents the history of the Qarmatian movement in great detail. Ibn Rizam is cited in a list of earlier refutations of the Isma'iliyya, but a title is not indicated and direct citations cannot be identified. Al-Mas'udi's work is a possible source for al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah, but its focus is on historical events rather than a discussion of theological concepts.

#### Ibn al-NadTm (d, 385/995 or 388/998)

Another reference to Ibn Rizam is found in Abu l-Faraj Muhammad b. Ishaq Ibn al-Nadim's Kitdb al-Fihrist , an inventory of Arabic books of the time. Under the entry on Ibn Rizam, Ibn al-Nadim lists a book (without indicating a title) in which the Isma'iliyya was refuted and its teachings revealed (al-kitdb alladhi raddafihi 'aid l-IsmdWywa wa-kashafa madhhibahum). Judging from the passages cited by Ibn al-Nadim which are similar to the information provided by al-Mas'udi,

Ibn Rizam refuted the Isma'iliyya and in particular the Qaramita on historical grounds. He described the early development of the Isma'ili movement, tracing its origins to the Persian city of al-Ahwaz and relating it to the Daysaniyya and their dualist doctrine, in which light and darkness are considered the primal elements and sources of good and evil. According to the citations by Ibn al-Nadim, Ibn Rizam identifies Maymun al-Qaddah and his son 'Abd Allah b. Maymun as the alleged founders of the movement, the former proclaiming the divinity of 'All, the latter claiming prophethood for himself and deceiving the people with various sleights of hand (al-sha'dbidh). 'Abd Allah b. Maymun travelled widely in order to spread his ideas. In Kufa he won over Hamdan b. al-Ash'ath, known as Qarmat, who in turn recruited his brother-in-law 'Abdan for the Isma'ili cause. Both would play a major role in the development of the movement. Ibn al-Nadim then reports on the continuous dispersion of the Isma'ilis in Rayy, Tabaristan, Khurasan, Yemen, Egypt and the Maghreb until the beginning of the Fatimid rule. He states that the contempt for the law (al-istikhdf bi-l-sharVa) and the claim of prophethood (al-wad' li-l-nubuwwa) were part of their rule.

Akhu Muhsin (late 4th/10th c.)

Ibn Rizam's book was extensively used by the polemicist Sharif Abu l-Husayn Muhammad b. 'All, an 'Alid from Damascus, better known as Akhu Muhsin. He was a contemporary of the first Fatimid caliph 'Ubayd Allah and a descendant of Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. Thus he had close relations to the ruling elite of the Isma'ilis, which did not prevent him from severely criticising them in his work. Written around 372/982, Akhu Muhsin's text is also not extant, but can be partly reconstructed on the basis of the following later references:

Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Nuwayri's (d. 733/1333) *Nihdyat al-arabfifunun al-adab* ,

- Abu Bakr 'Abd Allah b. al-DawMarl's (d. after 736/1335) *Kanz al-durar wa-jdmV al-ghurar* , and

- Taqi al-Din Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Maqrizi's (d. 845/1442) *IttVdz al-hunafd' bi-akh-bdr al-a'imma al-Fdtimiyin al-khulafd'* .

Judging from a passage in Ibn al-DawMm's *Kanz al-durar*, it seems that Akhu Muhsin knew Ibn Rizam personally. Taken together, the three accounts offer some insights into the content of Akhu Muhsin's anti-Isma'ili polemic based on Ibn Rizam. Akhu Muhsin presents a detailed history of the Isma'ili movement, the early history of which corresponds to the passage cited by Ibn al-Nadim. It includes the alleged dualistic origin of the group, going back to the Daysaniyya and the Majus/" Maymun al-Qaddah, the "son of Daysan", is presented as the founder of an extremist sect called Maymuniyya. His son 'Abd Allah claimed to be a prophet and supported his claims by deceiving the ordinary people with tricks. Originally coming from the region around al-Ahwaz, he founded the Isma'ili movement, which quickly spread across the Islamic empire, both into North Africa, Egypt and the East. His adherents claimed to be followers of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, and of his son Muhammad b. Isma'il, whom they considered to be the expected Mahdi waiting to come at the end of time. The first Fatimid caliph, 'Ubayd Allah, was venerated as a direct descendant of 'Abd Allah b. al-Maymun and Muhammad

b. Isma'il. Hamdm Qarmat and 'Abdan are similarly presented as protagonists of the movement. Their followers founded a separate Isma'ili movement, called the Qaramita. They were extremely successful and even founded their own state in Bahrain. The development and military success of the Qaramita is described in much detail, especially by Ibn al-DawMm. Following Hamdm and 'Abdan, Abu Sa'id al-Jannabi and his son Abu Tahir began to play a major role. Under the latter's command the Qaramita attacked Mecca and stole the black stone. The account by Akhu Muhsin appears to be a mix of reliable information and polemical distortion. While the description of the schism and the expansion of the Qaramita correspond to historical reality, the dualist origin of Isma'ilism is an unproven claim.

'Abd al-Jabbar (d, 415/1025)

In his Tathbit dald'il al-nubuwwaj 'Abd al-Jabbar mentions Ibn Rizam three times and provides some additional information on the early history of the movement.

(1) The first passage describes an incident that took place in the Qarmatian community in Bahrain, where, in 319/931, its leader Abu Tahir ceded power to a certain Zakira al-Isfahani al-MajusI. Zakira had come from Persia to Bahrain three years earlier and pretended to be "the Expected One". By tricking him with a false sign, he convinced Abu Tahir of his mission, which led the latter to refer to Zakira as "God and Lord" (ildhuna wa-rabbund). According to 'Abd al-Jabbar, Abu Tahir preached to his people that all the earlier teachings about the prophet Muhammad and his successors, the imams 'All, Isma'il b. Ja'far and Muhammad b. Isma'il as well as the Mahdi, were all futile (hddhd kulluh bdtil)j and that this was in fact the secret that he and the predecessors had kept hidden for the previous 60 years. 'Abd al-Jabbar's report also states that Abu Tahir then commanded that the "liars" be renounced (al-la'n 'aid l-kadhdhdbin) - meaning the prophets Adam, Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad - and ordered the envoys from the different regions to disclose their secrets. These envoys reported on (the alleged founding figure) 'Abd Allah b. Maymun b. Daysan b. Sa'id al-Ghadban (in other texts referred to as 'Abd Allah b. Maymun al-Qaddah)" and Muhammad b. al-Husayn b. Juhar Bukhnan (?). Their reports also focused on the false teachings and the misdeeds of the Qarmatian sect, such as the massive deception of Muslims, their pretending to belong to the Shi'a, the annunciation of the Mahdi, disclosing the lies of the prophets (azharu takdhib al-anbiyd'), and the suspension of the law (ta W al-shard 'i).' Abd al-Jabbar explains that he drew this information from the books of Ibn Rizam, a certain 'Atiyya and other scholars. The Qadi then also lists the infamous deeds of Zakira as described in the books of these scholars: the public insult of the prophets; the burning of the Scriptures (Masdhif, Tawrdt and InjU) in order to free the people from them and the prosecution of anyone who kept parts of them; the permission to marry close relatives, such as mothers, daughters and sisters, as well as to fornicate; the abolishment of the Islamic restrictions for slaughtering by approving the killing of beasts by "lancing into the haunch" and awaiting their death; and finally, the intention to infiltrate Iraq, exterminate the religion of Muhammad and kill his followers.



At the end of the story, as it is reported by 'Abd al-Jabbar, Abu Tahir finally became aware of Zakira's deception and killed him. Nonetheless, the whole affair continued to be a great scandal (fadiha 'azima) for the entire community and, in particular, for its leader Abu Tahir. The Qarmatī scholars legitimised this scandal by referring to the "inner meaning" of Abu Tahir's submission to the man from Isfahan, which was not apparent to the ordinary people ("... fa-kdna li-taslimihi bdtin ghayr md zahara /z-Z-nas"), as 'Abd al-Jabbar tells us.

(2) In addition to the Zakira affair, 'Abd al-Jabbar mentions several heretical incidents that occurred in various Qarmatī groups, such as the proclamation and veneration of a human leader as God, namely Abu Sa'id and Abu Tahir. According to the author, all these scandalous occurrences led to dissent in all regions with an Isma'ili presence. He explains that leading members of the da'wa, namely Abu l-Qasim 'Isa b. Musa, Abu Muslim b. Hammām al-Mawsali, his brother Abu Bakr and Abu Hatim Ahmad b. Hamdm al-Razi al-Kilabi (?), expressed their disapproval of the disclosure of the esoteric meaning (izhār al-hdīn) and the uncovering of the mission (kashf al-da'wa), for which Abu Tahir was accountable. As a result of these scandals and the disdain for the Prophet Muhammad, several prominent figures broke away from the community. According to 'Abd al-Jabbar one of them was a certain Abu l-Ghayth al-'Ijli, a representative of the Qarmatian community in the Maghreb. He wrote a book in which he explained that the cause of the Qarmatians was obscure to him, and that he had mistakenly believed they were Shī'ites and followers of the Mahdī. 'Abd al-Jabbar states that Ibn Rizām in his Kitāb al-kabīr mentions others like al-'Ijli, who belonged to the five ranks of the da'wa (min al-mardtib al-khams) that dissociated themselves from the sect.

(3) Finally, Ibn Rizām is cited a third time as someone who disclosed the roots and secrets of the Isma'ili propaganda. 'Abd al-Jabbar cites a conversation between al-Zanjani al-Qadi, who is described as the greatest Isma'ili hujja with important followers within and outside of Basra, and one of his followers, who told al-Zanjani about a discussion he had with Abu Tamim. The latter, when asked about the consequences of Ibn Rizām's uncovering of the roots and secrets of the da'wa, assured his counterpart that these unveilings would not prevent them from having a great number of followers. This would be the case, even if new converts became aware of more of the tricks (al-hiyāl) infamy (al-fadd'ih) and lies (al-akddhib) of the Isma'iliyya than Ibn Rizām and his successors had known. Abu Tamim explains that even then, people would still follow them because they were granted miracles, signs and proofs, and they believed that the Isma'ilis spoke in the name of the Mahdī and the Hujjat Alldhī even though none of it was true. Once again, 'Abd al-Jabbar has Abu Tamim talk about Ibn Rizām on another occasion, stating that Ibn Rizām's work did not threaten the future of the community, since this knowledge was not very widespread and the people were not affected. Abu Tamim is quoted as saying that those who were aware of the secrets could be controlled easily.

The information provided by 'Abd al-Jabbar about Ibn Rizām can be summarised in three points: first, the scandalous episode of Abu Tahir and Zakira in Bahrain, including their lawlessness and condemnation of the prophets; second, the critique and withdrawal of important Isma'ili leaders as a consequence of

Abu Tahir's shameful performance; and finally, the general importance of Ibn Rizam's revelation of the origins and secret teachings of the sect as being based on defraud and falsehood.

Abu l-Qasim al-Bustf (d, 420/1029)

Although in his *Min kashfasdr al-Bdtiniyya wa- 'Awdr madhhabihim* Abu l-Qasim al-Busti mainly uses authentic Isma'ili material, in one passage he relies on anti-Isma'ili accounts, such as Ibn Rizam, who is cited by name. " The passage presents the well-known alleged origins of Isma'ilism in dualism (*madhhab al-thanawiyya*) and the belief in the two fundamental principles of light and darkness; it declares the teachings of the Bdtiniyya to be identified with those of the Zoroastrians (*al-Majus*). As evidence, al-Busti tells the story of the founding figure Barmak al-Balkhi and his successor 'Abd Allah b. Maymun, which appears to be a slightly different version of the same story found in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist* and the references to Akhu Muhsin.

According to al-Busti, the Isma'ilis intentionally mingled their doctrine with Islam (and in particular with Shi'ite thinking) in order to vanquish and deceive the Arabs. Furthermore, the passage based on Ibn Rizam includes a detailed account of the methods of the Isma'ili mission which aimed at converting different groups in society. The esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an is presented as an aim of wilful confusion and the abolishment of the law as a means to an end.

Although al-Busti adopts some information from Ibn Rizam, he also criticises him, namely for writing that the son of Barmak al-Balkhi, according to Ibn Rizam the founder of the Isma'ili sect, claimed the prophethood. Al-Busti instead believes that Barmak himself had only claimed a high rank (*mahallan rafi'an*), which created confusion among the masses and led some to believe that he had been a prophet (*munabbi*). This comment underlines al-Busti's critical attitude towards Ibn Rizam's polemical presentation.

al-Hakim al-JishumT (d, 494/1101 or 545/1150)

In al-Hakim al-Jishumi's *Shark 'Uyun al-Masd'iP* the origins of the Isma'iliyya are traced back to Mani and the Majusiyyaj similar to that explained in the earlier sources. Furthermore, al-Jishumi describes the early history of the Qarmatian movement and its missionary activities in the various regions with details similar to those provided by 'Abd al-Jabbar in his *Tathbit*. There is only one reference to Ibn Rizam, namely his report that the Isma'ilis believe that Muhammad b. Isma'il is "the creator and form-giver" (*khdliq wa-musawwir*) and that he will rise at the end of time as the awaited one (*al-qd'im al-zamdn*)P The role of Muhammad b. Isma'il was indeed a point of contention in early Isma'ili history. But the statement on the perception of Muhammad b. Isma'il as *khdliq wa-musawwir* remains unclear and has no equivalent in other references to Ibn Rizam.

Ibn at-MatabimT (d, 536/1141)

In his *Tuhfat al-mutakallimmfi l-radd 'aid l-faldsifaj* Ibn al-Malahimi mentions Ibn Rizam twice and describes him as an author who refuted the ideas and teachings

of the Isma'iliyya, in particular their alleged dualist origins. "" In his Mu 'tamad, Ibn al-Malahimi dedicates himself to a more comprehensive refutation, including the (alleged) Isma'ili concepts of two gods, the negative theology, the emanation process including prophecy (natq al-nubuwwa) and ta'wU - all teachings that Ibn al-Malahimi qualifies to be similar to the teachings of the philosophers. He explicitly refers this information back to Ibn Rizam and his book about "the exposure of their secrets" (kashf asrdrihim). But it is rather unlikely that he is faithful in this reference, since a discussion about true Isma'ili concepts is not documented in other references to Ibn Rizam's book. Ibn al-Malahimi seems to have had additional sources from other authors. Ibn al-Malahimi also repeats the (alleged) origin in Dualism and Zoroastrianism and their aim of the deposition of Islam (khaV al-Islam)j likewise explicitly referring them to Ibn Rizam, which corresponds to the other fragments mentioned.

## Conclusion

In summary, the accounts presented point to two major issues: Ibn Rizam presents the alleged dualistic origin of Isma'ilism and constructs a genealogical relationship between the atheistic founders of the movement and its contemporary leaders. He describes their early development, underlining such shameful events as the theft of the black stone or the Zakira affair, which most clearly demonstrate the heretical identity of the community. Second, Ibn Rizam roughly describes some alleged teachings of the Isma'iliyya, such as the defamation of the prophets and the disregard for Islamic law, and presents them in a polemical sharpening in order to emphasise their heretical content. He includes references to their missionary strategy that is based on fraud and deception.

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah cites Ibn Rizam as one of his predecessors in the refutation of the Isma'iliyya, but provides no further details. He may have accessed writings by Ibn Rizam directly or via one of the references mentioned, or he may have merely been aware of its existence. He does not repeat the history of the community, which is a major part of Ibn Rizam's polemic. However, his attacks on Isma'ili teachings include some of the polemical statements that were also ascribed to Ibn Rizam, such as the contempt of prophecy and the suspension of the law. But these statements are so general that it is impossible to identify (only) Ibn Rizam as their source.

## 1.4 The AntMsma'ili Forgery Kitab al-Balagh

### The Kitab al-Balagh Cited by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah

In addition to the four authors of earlier refutations of the Isma'iliyya, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah cites a letter with the title Kitab al-Baldgh or al-Baldgh al-akbar wa-l-ndmus al-a'zam as his source:

"Then it is reported what is in their [the Isma'illis'] epistle ifi risalatihim) called Book of initiation (Kitab al-Balagh) or maybe they called it The ultimate initiation and the greatest law

(al-Balagh al-akbar wa-l-namus al-a'zam). But I refer those who want to occupy themselves with their esoteric meanings and secrets (batinihim wa-sara'irihim) to these books. They are widely known and openly shown (mashhura ma'rufa ma'ruda) for those who wish [to access] them."

Apparently al-Mu'ayyad claims that the Kitab al-Baldgh is a genuine Isma'ili text. He advises the interested reader to consult this and other Isma'ili books, stating that they were well known and accessible to everyone. He gives the impression that he himself has read these texts and presents himself as someone who knows the esoteric and allegedly secret teachings of the Isma'iliyya.

In a passage from a letter of al-Mu'ayyad preserved in al-KirmM's al-Risalat al-Kdfiyaj al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah provides further details about the content of the Kitdb al-Baldgh. There he states:

"And they possess a letter called al-Balagh al-akbar, in which they permit fornication (al-zina), in particular the sexual intercourse between brothers and sisters (wati'a al-ikhwan), and they allow the drinking of wine (sharb al-khamr) and the consumption of pork (akl lahm al-khinzir). And they discredit [...] the prophets in general and our Prophet, may God grant him peace [...]"

The passage lists some of the common reproaches against the Isma'iliyya which underline their alleged heretical teachings. In his response to al-Mu'ayyad, al-Kirmanī denies that this book belonged to the community's literary canon. He criticises the latter's use of the Kitdb al-Baldgh and advises him to consult instead reliable and well-known Isma'ili books.

A third reference by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah to the Kitdb al-Baldgh exists. It was found in Ibn Hanash's al-QdtVa fi l-radd 'aid l-Bdtiniyya. Ibn Hanash refers to an until today unknown anti-Isma'ili refutation by al-Mu'ayyad in which the latter explained the following about the Kitdb al-Baldgh al-sdbi':

"[...] the Bdtiniyya wrote it for Sayf al-Dawla [(d. 333/945) Buyid amir of northern Syria under the 'Abbasids] and summarised in it their scandalous and shameful acts, the permission of the religiously forbidden acts, the marriage of daughters and sisters, the defamation of the prophets and in particular our Prophet Muhammad, may God grant him and his family peace"/"

According to Ibn Hanash, al-Mu'ayyad furthermore explained that the Kitdb al-Baldgh reached 'Adud al-Dawla (d. 338/944), the Buyid amir in Persia and Iraq, who in turn sent it to the Mu'tazill scholar Abu 'Abd Allah al-Basri (d. 369/980) with the request to write a refutation. The information on the addressee and the diffusion provided in this short fragment cannot be confirmed through other references. Regarding the content of the Kitdb al-Baldgh, it agrees with the criticism mentioned in the previous citation.

Other Fragments of the Kitab al-Balagh

The origins of the Kitdb al-Baldgh are not entirely clear. Fragments of it survived in anti-Isma'ili literature under different names, most of the time entitled Kitdb al-Baldgh, sometimes with additional composites. Stern and Madelung studied the tradition of the Kitdb al-Baldgh. Lacking authentic Isma'ili writings from the very early period, they based their analysis for the most part on later critical references and fragments, namely by Ibn al-Nadim, Akhu Muhsin, transmitted mainly by al-Nuwayri, al-Baqillani, 'Abd al-Jabbar, Abu l-Qasim al-Busti, al-Baghdadi, al-Jishumi and al-Daylami and al-Ghazali and a biography of the Zaydi Imam al-Nasir (d. 324/935). " They believe that the Kitdb al-Baldgh was not a fixed book, but rather circulated in several versions. The common motive of these versions was an alleged "gradual initiation" that leads ever more deeply into the heretical doctrines of the Isma'iliyya. Stern reconstructed a version of the Kitdb al-Baldgh based on the mentioned later sources. " " He judges it to be a forged tradition falsely attributed to the Isma'ilis by their enemies. But Stern also demonstrates that it was not pure invention, but actually connected to authentic Isma'ili concepts. He concluded that the term baldgh "can be traced back with all certainty to Isma'ili usage" and was used to express genuine Isma'ili notions of "celestial hierarchy". The seven initiatory stages, as described in the Kitdb al-Baldgh, might have been created to parallel the seven eras of the prophets and imams in Isma'ili teaching. " The concept of gradual initiation and a development towards physical and spiritual perfection was likewise not unknown in Isma'ili theology. " But the content of the doctrines, which were allegedly taught at the different levels of initiation, were according to Stern malevolent phantasy and sophisticated distortions attributed to the Isma'ilis by their refuters. It follows a list of the mentioned fragments or references to the Kitdb al-Baldgh. Most of the references are the same as those who also cite Ibn Rizam.

Akhu Muhsin (fl. late 4th/10th c.)

The oldest fragments go back to Akhu Muhsin. According to al-Nuwayri, Akhu Muhsin cites the text in question as follows: "In one of their books, known under the title Kitdb al-Siydsa, I have found further particulars pertaining to the instruction of the mission among the religious people." " It is unclear where this title comes from, but a similar version of it is used by al-Baghdadi/ " The further explanations about its content, including the term "baldgh" suggest that Akhu Muhsin was actually referring to a version of the Kitdb al-Baldgh. He explains that the text is an instruction guide to missionaries telling them how to win over converts in a nine-stage (baldgh) process, through which the person is introduced step by step into the atheistic and libertine beliefs of Isma'ilism. Akhu Muhsin then cites the teachings of each of these steps, in which gradual advancement toward knowledge of the Isma'ili doctrines is achieved through a mixture of confusion and persuasion. The whole process finally leads into heresy (ilhdd)j the negation of God's properties (ta'til) and licentiousness (ibdha)}

ibn al-Nadim (d. 385/995 or 388/998)

In 377/987, only a few years after Akhu Muhsin, in the Fihrist Ibn al-Nadim mentions a book entitled Kitdb al-Baldgh al-sdbV:

"They [i.e. the Isma'iliyya] have the seven grades of initiation (al-balaghat al-sab'a) that contain the following: the book of the first grade of initiation for the ordinary people (al-'amma), the book of the second grade for the people a little more advanced (fawq ha'ula'i qalilan), the book of the third grade for people who have been in the community for one year (man dakhala fi l-madhab sand), the book of the fourth grade for those who have been in the community for two years, the book of the fifth grade for people who have been in the community for three years, the book of the sixth grade for those who have been in the community for four years and the book of the seventh grade containing the achievement of the community (natijat al-madhab) and the greatest revelation (al-kashf al-akbar)"

Ibn al-Nadim notes that he had read the text and found profound statements in it, namely the permission of practices and rules that are religiously banned by the law and its followers (ibdhat al-mahzurdt wa-l-wad' min al-shard'V wa-ashdbihd).

Abu Bakr al-BaqillanT (d, 403/1013)

Abu Bakr al-Baqillani also referred to and refuted the Kitdb al-Baldgh in his lost Kitdb Kashf al-asrdr wa-hatk al-astdr. He speaks of 16 grades. The title of the book is given as al-Balagh al-akbar wa-l-namus al-a'zaniy just as it is cited by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah.

'Abd al-Jabbar (d, 417/1025)

In the refutation of the Qaramita included in his Tathbitj 'Abd al-Jabbar mentions the book three times under the title al-Baldgh al-sdbV wa-l-ndmus al-a'zam} " "

While Akhu Muhsin, Ibn al-Nadim and al-Baqillani do not name an author, 'Abd al-Jabbar ascribes the text to the Fatimid Abu l-Qasim, who later became the caliph al-Qa'im bi-amri-llah (r. 322/934-334/946), son and successor to the first Fatimid caliph 'Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi. Furthermore, 'Abd al-Jabbar reports that al-Qa'im sent the book to Abu Tahir b. Sa'id al-Jannabi, head of the Qaramitians of Bahrain/ 'Abd al-Jabbar explains that the book contains the secrets of the mission (sin al-da'wa), ' ' the truth of their doctrine (haqiqa madhhabi-the order for the Qaramita to pass themselves off as Shi'ites (shVat ahl al-bayt) in order to seduce members of this community more easily in their fight against the 'Abbasids, kill Muslims and burn mosques and Qur'an manuscripts (mushafs). ' ' Following 'Abd al-Jabbar, the Kitdb al-Baldgh further contains an instruction for the way of proselytising neophytes, each on a different basis, using different sorts of tricks to provoke doubt among them (bi-hasab tabaqdti-him wa-ihtimdlhim li-l-shakk wa-l-hiraY . Altogether the gradual advancement in the sect (majdlis al-tarqiyya) leads, 'Abd al-Jabbar explains, to the abolition of religious obligations and doctrines, such as the prayer, the prohibition of incestuous relationships, as well as the prohibition of drinking wine and eating pork.

Abu l-Qasim al-Bustī (d, 420/1029)

In his *Min kashf asrār al-Bḍīniyya wa-'Awdh madhhabihim*, Abu l-Qasim al-Bustī presents the strategy of Isma'īlī da'wa among different groups of society, such as simple people, Jews, Christians, pagans and Iranian aristocracy. Without referring to a gradual initiation, let alone a number of necessary steps, he notes that the mission is based on delusion and disarray aiming at the detachment of the previous religion and the abandonment of the religious duties.

Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdādī (d, 429/1038)

Further information is provided by 'Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdādī in his heresiography *al-Farq bayna l-firaq* written in the 420s. The chapter *Dhikr al-Bḍīniyya wa-baydn khurujihim 'an jam' firaq al-isldm* includes an exhaustive polemical description of bḍīni teachings. Here, al-Baghdādī mentions a text with the title *Kitdb al-Siydsa wa-l-baldgh al-akid wa-l-ndmus al-a'zam* and explains that he himself had read it. Like 'Abd al-Jabbar, al-Baghdādī claims that the text was a letter sent to Abu Tahir b. Sa'id al-Jannabi. Unlike his Mu'tazillī colleague, however, al-Baghdādī presents 'Ubayd Allah b. al-Hasan of Qayrawan as the author of the text. ""

According to al-Baghdādī the *Kitdb al-Siydsa* contains an explanation for the Isma'īlī missionaries concerning their opportunist approach: the gradual introduction into Isma'īlī doctrine, finally leading to the abolishment of the law through esoteric exegesis. Al-Baghdādī cites the book several times and lists nine grades (*mardtib*).

al-Hakim al-Jishumī (d, 494/1101 or 545/1150)

In the chapter of the *Bḍīniyya* in his *Shark Vyiin al-masdh al-Jishumi* cites two passages of the *Kitdb al-Baldgh*. His purpose is to show that Isma'īlī doctrine is identical with that of the Materialists (*al-Ddhiriyya*). In contrast to al-Baghdādī and in accordance with 'Abd al-Jabbar, he attributes the epistle to the second Fatimid caliph Abu l-Qasim al-Qayrawani. The addressee, however, according to al-Jishumī, was a certain Wasif al-Muhammadi, whose identity is unclear. Similar to most of the previous references, al-Jishumī speaks of a seven-stage initiation leading to the abolishment of the laws and religious obligations (*ibtal al-shara'i' wa-l-diyndt*). Each of the initiatory steps is briefly described.

al-Ghazālī (d, 505/1111)

The refutation of the Ash'arite theologian Abu Hamid Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Ghazālī entitled *Fadd'ih al-Bḍīniyya wa-fadd'il al-mustazhiriyya* or *al-Mustazhin fadd'ih al-Bḍīniyya* mainly targets the teaching of *taqlidj* which he describes as the unconditional compliance to an infallible imam as exclusive teaching authority. He does not mention a *Kitdb al-Baldgh*, but describes nine gradual steps of initiation that correspond largely to the description of al-Baghdādī. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī identifies propaganda strategies for eight different

groups of people.

Muhammad b, al-Hasan al-Daylamī (d. 711/1311-2)

In his *Qawd'id 'aqd'id Al Muhammad*, al-Daylami preserves valuable quotations and paraphrases of the *Kitdb al-Baldgh*. Like 'Abd al-Jabbar and al-Jishumi, al-Daylami names Abu l-Qasim al-Qayrawanī as the author of the letter. He also identifies the *Kitdb al-Baldgh* as a guide to the exit from religion (*al-khuruḡ min al-dīn*) and speaks of nine gradually progressing stages (*tartībfi l-taraqqu daraj* or *tartīb al-istidrāj* or *hiyal murattab*). The nine stages listed correspond mostly to those indicated by al-Baghdadi and al-Jishumi, as the summary below demonstrates. The aims of the mission are indicated as unbelief (*al-kufr*) and heresy (*al-ilhād*). Accordingly, the seventh grade (*al-baldgh al-sdbi*), corresponding to the greatest advancement (*al-baldgh al-akbar*) leads - in the presentation of al-Daylami - to the renouncement of God's attributes (*ta'til*), including his capacity to create, which results in the negation of God, the Creator, and thus implies the total abolishment of the religion of Islam.

## Conclusion

The relationship between the different excerpts is not clear. The diverse attribution of authorship and recipient of the letter as well as the partly divergent information concerning the initiation steps indicate a forgery. Stern's reconstruction of a version of the *Kitdb al-Baldgh* is based on four of the sources mentioned above: The most substantial part of it is taken from Akhu Muhsin, transmitted mainly by al-Nuwayri, whereas the other parts originate with al-Baghdadi, al-Jishumi and al-Daylami. Judging from the reconstructed text, the *Kitdb al-Baldgh* contained two major notions: (1) The first refers to the different strategies of the Isma'ili missionaries each depending on the community to which the neophyte originally adheres, including Sabians, Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, Manichaeans, Philosophers, Dualists and Muslims, divided into Sunnis and Shi'ites. (2) The second notion presents instructions for the missionaries on how to introduce neophytes gradually into the secret Isma'ili teachings, depending on the time spent in the community and following the seven (resp. nine) stages listed below. The two sorts of instructions do not correspond but may overlap.

The additional references make this picture a little more complex in some details, but do not add substantially new information. They strengthen the overall presentation. The following overview of the different stages of initiation summarises the information provided by the different authors (see p. 65).

The overview shows that the actual number of levels is as unclear as the exact content of each of the steps. Their variety may result from the various circulating versions of the text. While Akhu Muhsin, al-Baghdadi, al-Daylami, and al-Ghazali speak of nine levels, Ibn al-Nadim, 'Abd al-Jabbar and al-Jishumi assume that there are seven grades to pass before arriving at *al-baldgh al-akbar*. The indication of 16 stages by al-Baqillani remains unique. (This is why he is left out in the overview.) A commentary by al-Daylami gives some hints to solve the problem. He once declares *al-baldgh al-sdb* as the greatest advancement



(al-baldgh al-akbar), whereas a second time he relates it to the ninth grade. "" Possibly the stages of "uprooting" and "detachment" indicated by some authors as stages eight and nine can be seen to be the result of the seven-stage initiation without being another formal stage, as indicated by others. The exact correspondence of the stage names one to seven in all references that indicate names (except al-Ghazali) and the differences concerning stage eight and nine also suggests this conclusion. Al-Baghdadi's reference to treaties of belief and oaths (as stage eight) further supports this view. Concluding covenants and swearing oaths at the end of the initiation process were both widespread practices in the Isma'ili da'wa. In the Ithbdtj al-Mu'ayyad does not provide explicit details of the book, but merely states that it contains the "secrets" of the Isma'ilis. Furthermore, he speaks of several books (hddhihi al-kutub)j though he explicitly names only the Kitdb al-Baldgh. However, in his second citation (preserved in al-Kirmanl's Kdfiya), he lists similar content as the one described in the other reference with regards to the outcome of such an initiation process. Even if his sources in this point can hardly be identified, we may assume that he knew one of the circulating versions of the Kitdb al-Baldgh and used it as a reference for his attacks. It is likely that it did not differ essentially from the present reconstruction.

## 1,5 Summary

In this chapter I gathered information about the four authors of earlier refutations mentioned by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah. The texts of Ibn Qiba, al-'Alawi and Ibn 'Abdak are not extant. Only Ibn Rizam's writings are partly preserved in later references, a synopsis of which has shown that he describes the early history of the Isma'iliyya including shameful events and some of their alleged heretical doctrines that reappear similarly in the Ithbdt. Furthermore, al-Mu'ayyad cites the Kitdb al-Baldgh presenting it as an authentic Isma'ili text containing the secret teachings of the Isma'iliyya that lead to the abandonment of Islam. As is clear from the analysis, the text was an anti-Isma'ili forgery circulating in various versions about alleged missionary practices of the Isma'ili community. Due to the scarcity of information provided by al-Mu'ayyad, his exact sources can no longer be identified. What is evident is that he was aware of anti-Isma'ili writings circulating among the critics of the community. Referring to them was sufficient to discredit the Isma'iliyya as heretics.

In addition to the references mentioned in the Ithbdtj the chapter gathered anti-Isma'ili writings that provide important evidence of the intellectual defence against the Isma'iliyya. In particular the works of Mu'tazili and Zaydi authors are relevant in this context, because their accounts exceed the polemical presentations in the style of Ibn Rizam and provide a more serious discussion about authentic Isma'ili theological concepts. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah, too, seeks to discuss some authentic Isma'ili notions beyond polemics, as the following analysis will reveal.

## 2 Criticisms of Isma'ili Doctrines

### 2.1 Overview

#### Overview of al-Mu'ayyad bi-Uayh's Critique and Additional Material

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of al-Mu'ayyad bi-Uayh's critiques of the Isma'iliyya mentioned in the Introduction to the *Ithbdt nubuwwat al-nabi*. The Zaydi imam offers a short, but comprehensive refutation of basic teachings of the Isma'ili creed. According to him, their teachings revolve around three major points: (1) the negation of God, the Creator, (2) the denial of prophethood and (3) the abolishment of the religious law.

Due to their brevity, what these critiques mean is not immediately obvious.

Therefore, I will examine al-Mu'ayyad's statements on a broader textual basis: On the one hand, I complement his criticisms from the *Ithbdt* - where applicable - with arguments found in the rebuttal letter by al-Kirmani entitled *al-Kdfiya*. On the other hand, I will make use of other anti-Isma'ili texts of Mu'tazili and Zaydi origin that provide insight into the theological conflict with the Isma'iliyya. These include 'Abd al-Jabbar's *Tathbit dald'il al-nubuwwa*, Abu l-Qasim al-Bustl's *Min kashf asrdr al-Bdtiniyya wa- 'Awdr madhhabihim*, al-Hakim al-Jishumi's *Shark Vyiin al-masd'il* and Ibn al-Malahimi's *Tuhfat al-mutakallimm fi l-radd 'aid l-faldsifa* as well as his *Kitdb al-Mu'tamad fi usul al-diri*. Al-Jishumi and Ibn al-Malahimi came later than al-Mu'ayyad bi-Uayh and can therefore not be considered as potential sources for him. But they belong to the same tradition of Mu'tazili-Zaydi kalām and their explanations offer helpful clarifications.

#### Overview of Isma'ili Texts on Prophetology

An analysis of al-Mu'ayyad's scarce criticism furthermore requires looking at the corresponding Isma'ili ideas at stake. The most influential writings in this context originate from missionaries in North West Iran, Khurasan and Transoxania, who belonged to the so called "Iranian school". These philosopher-theologians amalgamated Shi'ite theology and Greek philosophy in an original manner and developed a new system of thought. Prophetological ideas played an important role in their debates. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Nasafi (d. 332/943), head of the Isma'ili da'wa in Nisabur, summarised his views on prophecy in his major work *Kitdb al-Mahsulj* written around 300/912. The text has not survived up to the present, but was widely circulated in Qarmatī circles and was soon afterwards criticised by Abu Hatim al-Razi (d. 322/934), al-Nasafi's contemporary and *dd'i* of Rayy. In his *Kitdb al-Isldhj al-Razī* corrected certain aspects of al-Nasafi's teachings. The text was, in turn, criticised by Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistmi (d. after 361/971), al-Nasafi's student and his successor in Khurasan. Al-Sijistmi composed a book entitled *Kitdb al-Nusra* to defend al-Nasafi's views against al-Razi. The book too has been lost, but numerous other works of al-Sijistmi are extant, on the basis of which we can study his prophetological concepts, including the *Kitdb Ithbdt al-nubu-*

wwdt "" , the Kashf al-Mahjub " , the Kitdb al-Maqdlid "\*" and the Kitdb al-Ifti-khdr " . Later, Hamid al-Din al-Kirmanî fuelled the debate with numerous writings and rehabilitated certain views of al-Razî/"

Though Isma'ili notions were not fixed dogmas and underwent major developments, in particular in the 4th/10th century, an outline of the major features can nonetheless be helpful when contextualising al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's critiques. Since the comments of al-Mu'ayyad are so brief, it is impossible to draw conclusions about exact sources; however, the following investigation will shed some light on the Zaydî imam's concerns.

## 2.2 The Negation of God (Through Ta'tîl)

### 2.2.1 The Isma'îlî Concept of the Twofold Negative Theology

#### The Criticism in the Ithbat

Before al-Mu'ayyad addresses the issue of prophetology, he criticises the Isma'îlî notion of God. Although this critique centres more around the question of God's unity, rather than prophecy, it seems justified to consider it in this context, since al-Mu'ayyad obviously believed this to be important information about Isma'îlî theology in general. He states:

"They [i.e. the Isma'îlîs] deny the creator (yanfunâ al-sanî') [...], because they say: It is not said about God the Exalted [that He is] existent (mawjud) and [it is] not [said, that He is] non-existent (la mawjud) [either]. [...]

For their ignorance (li-jahlihim) and excessive stupidity (fart ghabawathihim) they do not know that the negation of the negation necessitates the affirmation (nafy al-nafy yaqtadi al-ithbat) according to the Linguists (ahl al-lisan).

Don't you see that they, when they aimed at asserting the affirmation (inna aradu an yahaqqû al-ithbat), said: 'nothing else (la ghayr)', and they say: this is the opinion and nothing else and this is Zayd and no one else, and they combine two negations in order to assert the affirmation (yajma'un bayn al-nafyayn li-tahqiq al-ithbat).

Then they said. He is not 'non-existent' (la mawjud) and thus they asserted that He is existent (mawjud). Then they said 'non-existent' and thus they denied what they had just affirmed and they revoked what they had said. And this is nothing of what is unknown. But their aim in this is arriving at denying of God all attributes (ta 'til) and denying the creator (nafy al-sanî')."

The criticism contains two fundamental aspects: (a) the Isma'îlî notion of God that is based on a double negation of God's attribute of existence and leads to ta'tîl and - as a consequence - (b) the denial of God, the Creator.

#### The Reproach of Tashbîh Towards the Mu'tazilî and the Zaydiyya

The reproach of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah touches upon the fundamental theological problem that a faithful description of God is always exposed to two opposite risks: On the one hand, it risks committing tashbîh i.e. the description of

God in anthropomorphist ways, which violates His total otherness. On the other hand, it risks committing ta'tih i.e. denying all attributes of God, including the attribute of "existence", and thus negates His existence. Any theological explanation of tawhid is fraught with tension between these two extremes. They reflect two major trends in the intellectual history regarding ways of dealing with the description of God. On the one hand, there were the literalists (in Isma'ili terminology ahl al-zahir) who affirmed God's attributes as provided in the Qur'an and the hadith in a literal sense, such as God having a hand (as in Q 48: 10) or sitting on a throne (Q 20: 5). On the other hand, there were the rationalists, most notably the Mu'tazilis, who rejected these teachings and negated all anthropomorphic attributes of God. Through a figurative exegesis of the respective passages in the Qur'an (i.e. God's hand symbolises his power), Mu'tazili thinkers aimed at avoiding any tendency to liken God to man. According to this concept called tanzih (transcendentalism), God could not be a body (jism) or a form (surah), he could not be a thing, not limited, not describable, not situated in a place or a time, and not a being. Instead, the rationalists focused on the concepts behind these attributes, such as power, life or knowledge, and hoped to safeguard God's absolute otherness in doing so.

From an Isma'ili perspective, both methods (and many others) failed to provide an irrefutable description of God. In his Kitab al-Iftikhar, for example, al-Sijistani, accuses the Hashwiyya and the Mutakallimun of failing to grant God absolute transcendence (tawhid). Whereas, according to him, the Hashwiyya "attribute to God a finite body (jism mahdud), the Mutakallimun refer to God as a classifiable thing (shay' mawsum). In al-Sijistani's eyes, the via negationis applied by the Mu'tazila (ahl al-'adl) was still incomplete; their concept of tawhid was not totally free from tashbih. He accuses them, in fact, of being anthropomorphists, since their methodology was based on human perceptions. From his point of view, the descriptions and characteristics the Mutakallimun attributed to God were shared by humans:

"Whoever worships God through the negation of the attributes (nafy al-sifat) falls into hidden anthropomorphism (al-tashbih al-khafi), just as one who worships Him through the affirmation of the attributes (ithbat al-sifat) falls into obvious anthropomorphism (al-tashbih al-jali)." "

Al-Sijistani does not mention the Zaydiyya. But al-Kirmani deplored the fact that they followed the Mu'tazila. He accuses the Zaydiyya of misunderstanding tawhid and al-Mu'ayyad bi-Allah personally of "ignoring true tawhid"

### The Isma'ili Solution: Double Negative Theology

According to Isma'ili thinking, only the ahl al-haqd'iq, as the Isma'ilis labelled themselves, provide a convincing concept of the transcendence of God that avoids even the trap of hidden anthropomorphism. This is based on a double negative theology: The first step - a full and rigorous denial of all tashbiK as

applied by the Mu'tazila - must be complemented by a second step: a negation of the first negation. Hence, God must be described as not not a thing, not not limited, not not describable, not not situated in a place or time, not not a being. In other words, God must not be thought of as having a thingness, attributes, characteristics, limit, place, time, or even a being. Only after this second negation is God regarded as transcending "being" and "non-being" alike. The twofold negation thus renders God beyond existence and non-existence, absolutely ineffable and not subject to any predicate. "

### Refutations of the Double Negative Theology

This twofold negative theology, especially the denial of God as "existent", earned the Isma'ilis the charge of having committed ta'tU from many sides, including al-Mu'ayyad. He argues that, with the double negation, they fail to assert that God is certain ("... yaqtadi al-ithbdt..."). Mu'tazili writers, such as Abu l-Qasim al-Busti, al-Hakim al-Jishumi and Ibn al-Malahimi, rendered similar judgements. Al-Busti discusses the question in detail including a defence of the Mu'tazila against the charge of tashbih. ' He refutes the Isma'ili critique on the basis of its linguistic incoherence and contradiction to rules set up by the linguists (ahl al-lugha)j similar to the argument of al-Mu'ayyad:

"They [the Isma'illls] say: We do not say He [God] is a thing (shay') and we do not say that He is not a thing (la shay'). In the same way we do not say that He is existent (mawjud) and [we do] not [say that He is] not existent (laysa bi-mawjud). In the same way we do not say that He is knowing ('Mm) and not that He is not knowing (laysa bi-'Mm) and so on for the rest of His attributes (sifatihi). Because the affirmation (ithbat) of this attribute [equals] likening Him to His creature (tashbih lahu bi-khalqihi), and the negation (intifa') of these attributes in Him [equals] denying of Him all attributes (ta'til). Therefore we must not say this and not that." "

Al-Busti argues that the Isma'ilis contradict themselves with their double statements. A choice between ta'tU and tashbih is inevitable; otherwise they would leave the realm of reason ("... kharaju 'an qismat al-'aql"). Al-Jishumi similarly discredits the Isma'ili double definition of God as neither 'mawjud' (corresponding to tashbih) nor 'Id mawjud' (corresponding to ta'tU) as nonsense (fidsid). Like al-Mu'ayyad, al-jishumi concludes from their double negation the denial of the creator (nafy al-sdnV). A similar reproach is repeated by Ibn al-Malahimi who criticises the double negation as irrational ("wa-dhdlka Id ya'qul aslan") and explains that it does not prevent the risks of tashbih and ta'til. "

Al-Sijistmi was much concerned about this charge. In his Kitdb al-Iftikhdr, he forcefully claims that in fact the concept of a double negative theology escapes both tashbih and ta'til:

"There does not exist a tanzih more brilliant and more splendid than that by which we establish the absolute transcendence (nazzahna bihi) of our Creator (mubdV) through the use of these phrases in which two negatives (al-nafydn) apply to [the thing denied]: a nega

tive and a negative of a negative (nafyun wa-nafyu nafyin)."

Al-Kirmani, too, endeavours to defend his group against the charge of having committed ta'til in his Kitdb Rdhat al-'aqU when he explains that God is exalted above the two opposites of negation and affirmation.

#### Assessment of al-Mu'ayyad bi-Uah's Criticism

In light of these reflections, al-Mu'ayyad's critique becomes clearer. Like his colleagues, he accuses the Isma'iliyya of committing ta'tilj and thus leading to the denial of God's existence. He criticises this argument contrary to the rules of the linguists and, by extension, the rules of logic. In fact, the Isma'ili view is a result of the deep conviction that true knowledge of God ultimately cannot be acquired via the senses or rational thinking. All concepts, notions, definitions and names, either in the form of language or thought, are considered defective and insufficient. From an Isma'ili point of view, an understanding of God's true identity transcends the realm of human reasoning. This may be seen as a fundamental attack against a description of God based on rational arguments, which al-Mu'ayyad represents.

His conclusion that the concept of twofold negation implies the denial of God is not part of Isma'ili teaching, but appears to be a polemical sharpening of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah (and al-Jishuml).

### 2.3 The Negation of Prophecy (Through Tayid) and the Negation of the Law (Through Ta'w7[])

#### 2.3.1 The Isma'ilT Concept of Revelation

##### Ttie Criticism in ttie Ithbat

The next criticism of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah targets the notion of prophecy:

"[...] I saw the scum of the heretics and their mob working hard in order to introduce doubt into the miracles of our Prophet (li-idkhal al-shubah fi mu'jizdt nabiyyund), God bless him and grant him peace."

"They deny all prophecies (yankuruna al-nubuwwdt ajma')

"They say that Muhammad, God bless him and grant him peace, had only a [divine] inspiration (al-tayid) and no equivalent to revelation (al-wahy), mission (al-irsal) and the descending of Gabriel (nuzul Jibril), God grant him peace. And with 'the inspiration' (al-tayid) they point to the superiority (al-maziyya) that is reached by any poet, doctor, jurist, theologian or astrologer who stands out in his profession."

In these few lines al-Mu'ayyad expresses his fundamental criticism of the Isma'ili

notion of prophecy. He accuses the Isma'ilis of the negation of prophethood in general and of the prophetic office of Muhammad in particular. According to his description, Muhammad is devaluated from a real prophet who received a true revelation from God to an outstanding character, in the sense of having a particular gift or talent, comparable to the talent of an excellent poet or doctor. Moreover, al-Mu'ayyad deplores the Isma'ilis' doubt of Muhammad's miracles.

### The Isma'ili Concept of Revelation

In order to place al-Mu'ayyad's reproach of the misunderstanding of the Prophet in the proper context, it is helpful to examine the role of prophets in the Isma'ili concept of revelation. Revelation is closely linked to the cosmological system. It is beyond the scope of this work to present a precise picture of Isma'ili cosmology, which underwent major transformations, especially in the 4th/10th century. Al-Nasafi, al-Razi, and al-Sijistmi developed a cosmological concept that was strongly influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy. Al-Kirmani subjected this concept to a general revision, referring to the reflections of al-Farabi, who relied more on Aristotelian ideas. The differences between their models are secondary for the purpose of this analysis; a brief outline will have to suffice.

What they all have in common is the idea of a spiritual and a material world. The spiritual world functions as an intermediary between the unknowable God and the material world. God created the spiritual world *ex nihilo*. Through an act of creation (*ibdd*) the First Intellect came into being, also described as "the preder" (*al-sdbiq*) from which the Second Intellect or "the follower" (*al-tdli*) emanated (*inba'atha*). The perception of this pair of First and Second Intellects is one of the reasons why Isma'ilis have been accused by their critics of having hailed from dualist religions. After the origination of the First and the Second Intellect a complex process of emanation follows bringing about nature and the physical world, including all earthly beings: plants, animals and humans. Humans have a rational soul (*ndtiqa*), which enables them to seek knowledge from the spiritual world.

Spiritual knowledge is ultimately provided only by the First Intellect, resulting from its exclusive access to the unknowable God. This knowledge is not provided immediately. Only the prophets enter the realm of the First Intellect and receive knowledge from it. The Intellect bestows upon the prophets what Isma'ilis call *al-ta'yid* understood as "divine support", "inspiration" or "spiritual infusion". Al-Sijistmi explains: "He [the prophet] is the pure man inspired with the holy spirit [i.e. the Intellect] (*wa-huwa al-insdn al-sdfi al-mu'ayyad bi-ruh al-qud-* "176 other words, prophets with *ta'yid* are particularly gifted with intellectual faculties and talents that allow them privileged access to the Intellect and thus to divine knowledge in its pure spiritual form.

### Assessment of al-Mu'ayyad bi-Uah's Criticism

Against the backdrop of this perception, some criticisms of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah make more sense. When he explains that, according to Isma'ili teaching, Muhammad did not receive a revelation (*wahy*) or a message sent down to him from God,

he is seemingly targeting the Isma'ili notion of "inspiration", which was understood as the result of a system of emanation through several levels or intermediaries. According to this idea, the prophets only possess divine inspiration (tayid) due to their access to the First Intellect, which al-Mu'ayyad equates with the mere superiority of any gifted scientist.

In fact, Isma'ili thinkers, such as al-Sijistmi, denounce the conventional Islamic teaching of the revelation in terms of an angel descending from heaven and delivering the message through a voice heard by the prophet. Al-Sijistanl states that the site of the revelation is the heart of the prophet, in which he receives inspiration directly from the Intellect. Subsequently the prophet translates this knowledge into scripture composed in a language that is understandable by the people of his time. This concept is indeed different from the traditional Islamic concept of revelation (wa'iy), to which al-Mu'ayyad refers. Since his explanations are very short, it is not clear how much the Zaydi imam really knew about Isma'ili cosmology and revelation. But at least he seems to have had a clear perception of the fundamental differences compared to his own theological concepts. And he appears to be just when he criticises that the Isma'ili concept of revelation lacks the perception of God sending the angel Gabriel with His message down to the people ("irsdr\ "nuzul").

In the Isma'ili system of knowledge, ta'yid is inexhaustible and, in general, accessible to everybody, but "the ease of entry into the realm of the Intellect depends on the innate disposition and temperament" that is only awarded to the prophets. Al-Sijistanl draws a distinction between a prophet inspired by revelation (al-mu'ayyad) and a learned man (al-'alim) and explains that the former receives knowledge in a purely spiritual form, whereas the latter depends on its sensible representation. "In other words, only the prophets receive the benefits of knowledge in a pure, unbiased way that is impossible to reach even for philosophers and other educated men. The latter are limited to indirect acquisition of knowledge through sensory experience and reflection. Thus, with regard to al-Mu'ayyad's statement that prophets are on an equal level as scientists in Isma'ili teaching, he seems to be either mistaken or intentionally polemical.

### Other Refutations

Other refuters of Isma'ilism were likewise concerned with this problem. Al-Jishumi takes up the subject, albeit in less detail. Like al-Mu'ayyad, he criticises the Isma'iliyya's denial of the revelation (al-wahy) and the descent of an angel (nuzul al-malak). Al-Busti dedicates himself to the issue in more detail and raises the question of how God preached to the prophets (kayfa khdtabahum Allah) and how wahy really worked. He describes the traditional perception of wahy as follows: God sends an angel - in the case of Muhammad this is Gabriel - with His message to the prophet who listens to His speech (khitdbihi). In addition, God bestows a miracle upon the prophet that allows people to recognise him as truthful (sddiq) and his message as a true divine message. Al-Busti contrasts this perception to the teachings of the Isma'iliyya, which is based on a process that emanates from God (al-mubdV) to the First (al-sdbiq, al-'aql) and the Second Intellect (al-



tdlU al-nafs) and passes in several circles (dd'irdtY to the level of the prophets (al-ndtiqa). Subsequently, the revelation or rather the "transfer of knowledge" (wahy) from the spiritual world to the prophet occurs in three different states (hdldf) of the soul of the prophet. These correspond to angelical beings mentioned in the Qur'an, namely al-}add (Israfil), al-fath (Mika'il) and al-khaydl (Gibra'il). In the last state of al-khaydl (lit. "imagination"), the prophets are inspired (tu'addi bihi) with divine knowledge ('ulum al-ildhiyya). Al-Busti clearly discredits the Isma'ili teaching by tracing it back to a report of a single person (akhbdr al-dhddj) and concludes that it is an "obvious unbelief (al-kufr al-zdhiry\

### A Consequence: The Denial of Miracles

The Isma'ili concept of wahyjtayid causes another serious problem, which al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah as well as al-Busti and al-Jishumi allude to, namely the denial of miracles. According to widespread belief, God furnished the prophet with a miracle as a sign of his authenticity. It is the decisive and unique instrument for distinguishing between a prophet and a liar. According to the standard definition, as developed by the theologians a miracle (mu'jiza) must at least meet the following conditions: (1) It has to interrupt the customary course of events (naqd al-'dda), and (2) humans must be unable to produce such a miracle. These conditions are regarded to be necessary so that the existence of a miracle can only be considered possible through divine intervention. The witnesses of miracles must be able to rely on their senses in order to judge whether this event really interrupted the course of events and to determine empirically whether humans could have performed it.

The Isma'ili perception of ta'yid questions this concept, because it furnishes the prophets with knowledge that transcends sensory perception. The prophets understand the supernatural reality of all things ("tabd'V al-ashyd'i wa-khasd'isi- Therefore, al-Busti - following the Isma'ili perception - criticises miracles as baseless, because everything can be explained by the natural (tabd'V) and astrological (afldk) connections that are within the prophets' realm of knowledge. " We can add that this knowledge, by its very definition, exceeds the natural laws that are valid in the material world. As a consequence, the inspiration of the prophets with knowledge from the spiritual world of the Intellect undermines the concept of a miracle as a rational proof of prophecy. Following this notion, miraculous events can be simply explained by the supra-rational knowledge of the prophets and are thus no longer signs exclusively provided by God as evidence for everybody to examine. Al-Busti concludes that in this case it is no longer possible to distinguish between a true miracle and a simple trick. As a consequence, he discredits the Isma'ili teachings as totally false and based on irrationalities ("awdah fi l-fdsid yanbani 'aid ashiyd' ghayr ma'quia"). Although al-Mu'ayyad is much less explicit, it seems plausible that he had a similar understanding.

### 2.3.2 The Isma'ili Concept of Prophets (iNutaqa") and the Sacred Law (SharTa)

## The Criticism in the Ithbat

The reproach of denying prophecy is followed by the reproach of manipulating the law:

"[They relate] to the esoteric meaning (al-batin) and they [wrongly] believe that beyond what MusUms have at their disposal of rational proofs (hujaj al-'uqul), the Qur'an (al-kitab) and the sayings and doings [of the Prophet] (al-sunna) there is a truth (haqiqa), which they know and acquire, and it [i.e. this truth] is kept secret (makhtuma) [from all] but those who swear allegiance and promise their faithfulness (al-'uhud wa-l-mawathiq).

But when I uncovered it [i.e. their truth], I found infamies (makhazi), which appeared clearly in their writings [...]: they led [the initiated] among them to the perpetration of atrocities (irtikab al-fawahish) and allowed them the embracement of injustice (tatawwuq al-mazdlim) and they allowed them the drinking of alcoholic beverages (shurb al-khumur) and the omission of the prayers (tark al-salawat) and the prohibition of the almsgiving (man' al-zakdt) I" j "193

"And they name the laws (al-shard 7') nawdmis and they attain their denial and abolishment (jahdihi wa-ibtldihi) by claiming that everything has an inner meaning (bdtin) and the suspension of the obligation of fulfilling (suqut wujub al-'amal bihi) is known."

The passages contain various critiques. In summary, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah first blames the Isma'iliyya for their abolishment of the divine laws through esoteric exegesis. He does not use the expression "fa'wz/", but refers several times to the "bdtin" the esoteric meaning behind the letter of the religious commandments (found in the Qur'an and the sunna). Second, he criticises the limitation of religious instruction to initiated persons.

## The Isma'ili Concept of Prophets (l utaqa' and the Sacred Law (SharVa)

According to Isma'ili theology, the prophets have a second function. They not only receive divine knowledge, but they also have to pass it on to the people. The Isma'ili term for a prophet is ndtiq (pi. nutaqd') literally "one who speaks or enunciates". Leading up to the time of al-Mu'ayyad, there were six "speaking-prophets", namely Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, who "enunciated" some of their divine knowledge. To enable ordinary people to absorb this knowledge, the nutaqd' translated it into a written law (sharVa). These laws communicated by the prophets differed from each other. Each of the nutaqd' (except Adam) revoked the sharVa of the previous ndtiq and replaced it with a new, improved religious law. Since humanity is constantly developing spiritually, the law must be updated according to the intellectual level of the community being addressed. At the time of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah, the last law that had been revealed was the Qur'an, which was brought by Muhammad.

To fill the gap between two nutaqd' a series of imams (also referred to as the awsiyd') is responsible for guiding mankind. In the period of Muhammad, these were 'All, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, 'All Zayn al-'Abidin, Muhammad al-Baqir, Ja'far al-Sadiq, Isma'il b. Ja'far and Muhammad b. Isma'il. These imams par

ticipate in the enunciating process and receive divine guidance and additional, superior knowledge. This knowledge allows them to comprehend the esoteric (bdtin) meaning of the exoteric (zdhir) law as preached by Muhammad. While the apparent aspect of the law changes from one prophet to the other, the batin, i.e. its hidden truths (haqd'iq), are invariable.

#### Assessment of al-Mu'ayyad bi-Uah's Criticism and Ottier Refutations

In fact, the concept of bdtini meanings hidden behind zdhiri expressions familiar only to the imams was one of the main points of attack of anti-Isma'ili propaganda. The pejorative name al-Bdtiniyya given to Isma'ilis by their enemies underlines this. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah sharply criticises the concept of the bdtin and points to several severe consequences:

(1) First of all, the focus on the inner meaning of the law leads, according to him, to the abolishment of the duty of religious works and to the permission of unlawful deeds, of which he mentions a few particularly heretical examples. In a passage preserved in the *Risdlat al-Kdfiya* by al-KirmM, al-Mu'ayyad expresses himself in a similar way on this issue. " He accuses the Isma'iliyya of being heretics (mulhida) enemies of the prophet and his family (li-rasulihi salld Alldh 'alayhi wa-dlihi wa-li-ahli baytihi a'dd') and posits that their teachings are "totally outside of Islam" (khdrij minjumlat al-islam). His disastrous judgement is based on the Isma'ili denial that Muhammad proclaimed only the external form (al-zawdhir) of the law. That this teaching represents "unbelief" is, according to al-Mu'ayyad, compulsory knowledge ("qad 'alama daruratan ...") and common sense among all Muslim scholars. Furthermore, al-Mu'ayyad discredits the Isma'ilis' call for a complete nullification of the revealed laws (ibtld al-shard'V)j the alteration of the religious commandments (taghyir al-ahkdm) and various other heretical teachings. "

Al-Bustl's accusations resemble those of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah, when he criticises the abolishment of laws (ibtld al-shard'V) and the negation of religious duties (nafy ... al-'ibdddt). " Furthermore, he refutes the claim that Muhammad himself practiced ta'wU and explains - on the basis of several, in his eyes, false interpretations of Qur'anic verses - that such a "disguise" of God's will (al-taqiyyafi murddihi) and concealment would have been counterproductive, since the Prophet brought the message "for our [i.e. the humans'] benefit (li-masdlihindy\ Al-Jishuml " likewise refers to the teachings of the bdtin considered by Isma'ilis as the "truth of the laws (haqiqat al-shard'iy\ beyond what the ahl al-zdhir know about it. On the basis of several examples of false interpretation, he dismisses their teachings.

(2) The second criticism addressed by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah alludes to the mode of religious instruction in the Isma'ili community. Indeed, the Isma'ili imams revealed their esoteric knowledge only to selected members of the group, who were instructed in a hierarchical system of different ranks and functions. " What al-Mu'ayyad explicitly attacks is the restricted transmission of the religious knowledge of the imam to initiated persons within the Isma'ili community, namely those who are bound to it by contract and alliance (al-'uhud wa-l-mawdthiq) and passed through a seven-stage initiation (al-baldgh al-sdbV).

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the term al-baldgh refers to initiating steps, which gradually introduce the neophyte to the secret teachings of the Isma'ili community. Al-Mu'ayyad states that, in Isma'ili terminology, the law is called ndmus (pi. nawdmis)j also meaning "the confidant". Ndmus is indeed an authentic Isma'ili term. " Although it was polemically distorted, the concept had a concrete background in Isma'ili practices. "

### Conclusion: Challenge to Rational Proofs and Tjaz al-Qur'an

A fundamental problem emerges from the concept of bdtin and the consequences mentioned. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah only insinuates this, but we can attempt to make sense of his allusions: The secret and limited transmission of esoteric knowledge to initiated persons prohibits an open debate among scholars that is based on universally valid criteria for rational reflection. Al-Mu'ayyad states that the bdtin exceeds the rational proofs (hujaj al- 'uqul) that Muslims have at their disposal. Ibn al-Malahimi similarly discredits the doctrine of the bdtin and its revelation to the imams through inspiration (ilhdm) as lacking proof ("Id dalU 'alayhi"). He underlines that the Isma'ilis only use it tactically in order to cause confusion and deception.

In order to clarify this issue, it is important to know what was understood by bdtini knowledge from an Isma'ili perspective. In his al-Risdlat al-Kdfiya, al-KirmM explains his understanding of the concepts of zdhir and bdtin. According to him, the zdhir refers to immediate perception through sense experience ("mahsus ... yudrak bi-l-hawds"). It includes acts prescribed by religious law (al-'amdli al-mafruda fi l-shar')j such as the profession of faith (al-shahd-datayn)j prayer (al-saladt)j almsgiving (al-zakdt), fasting (a/-sawm), pilgrimage (al-hijja) and exerting all effort for religion (al-jihdd). In contrast, the bdtin comprises knowledge acquired through ideas (malum bi-l-khawdtir), imagination (al-awhdm), the souls (al-anfus) and the intellects (al-'uqul). It includes the knowledge of all abstract matters, such as the unity of God (al-tawhid)j his message (al-risdla) or the reason beyond the outward forms of devotion. The bdtin is beyond the ascertainment by physical perception through the senses. "" From this definition, al-Kirmanl concludes the necessity of esoteric interpretation ("al-ta'wU wdjW). He underpins his argument with references to the Qur'an and a hadithj which is supposed to show that Muhammad himself called for Al-Kirmanl furthermore concludes that the two aspects of knowledge cannot be understood by everybody in the same way. While the religious commandments found in the Scripture can be conceived by everybody of sound senses (hiss sahih) in equal measure, the understanding of the meanings behind them requires instruction and learning and differs from one group to the other according to their respective level of knowledge acquisition Cald hasab al-iktisdb) Al-Kirmanl therefore defends the practice by which the bdtin was revealed only to the initiated, which involved giving an oath of allegiance. In his Tanbih al-hddi wa-l-mustahdU he provides some further interesting insights into the topic. He dismisses the idea ascribed to the Mu'tazila and the "ahl al-istidldl wa-l-nazar" that reason Caql) is paramount to divine revelation. He explains that man, being born ignorant, needs the instruction with God's command (talim bi-amr Alldh),

since he is not able to make statements about truth through independent reasoning. He can only acquire knowledge about God and the religious duties through the Qur'an, mediated and interpreted by the Prophet Muhammad and the imams. Independent rational conclusions (istidlal bi-l-'uqul) are not valid and lead in his eyes to logical errors, different opinions, arbitrariness, and finally to idolatry (shirk) and heresy.

Having this consequence in mind, al-Mu'ayyad's concerns can be better understood. As a rational theologian he sees the fundamentals of his profession under attack. The teaching of the bdtirij understood as superior, supra-rational knowledge revealed to the imams and transmitted to initiated individuals, undermines open, rational reflection about the interpretation of the divine law. Rules of logic are no longer the universal benchmarks for theological conclusions.

This also applies to the doctrine of i'jdz al-Qur'dn which is under attack through the teaching of the bdtin. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah did not express himself explicitly on that problem, but might have had it in mind, as his overall argumentation suggests. Ibn al-Malahimi clearly raises concerns about this issue, viz. that the idea of the bdtini meaning of Qur'anic verses undermines the whole theory of the inimitability of the Qur'an. The concept of Vjdz al-Qur'dn works only when the outward appearance of the Qur'anic text is taken seriously and is accessible to everybody. The challenge (tahaddi) to imitate the Qur'anic text expressed in the Qur'an, - that is an essential element in the Vjdz rationale - must be understood as such, otherwise the impossibility of its realisation cannot be proven. If the tahaddi verses contain an esoteric meaning that is not understood by all people, in particular not by Muhammad's enemies, who don't belong to the circle of initiated persons, the lack of an imitation (mu'drada) of the Qur'an - the second essential element in the Vjdz rationale - cannot be proven. Instead, it can be objected that an imitation of the Qur'an was not realised, because the audience of the tahaddi verses did not understand the challenge. This objection is, in fact, discussed by al-Mu'ayyad (but without referring it to the Isma'iliyya). "

Furthermore, if the linguistic style of the Qur'anic text is only considered as the exoteric, superficial form of the Qur'an, then this can not be an argument for the Vjdz miracle. These considerations lead Ibn al-Malahimi to the conclusion that the concept of bdtini meanings transcending human reason destroys the cornerstone of the rational proof of Muhammad's prophecy. Al-Mu'ayyad endeavours to show that the inimitable character of the Qur'an is based on its linguistic purity (al-fasdha al-mujarrada) and textual structure (al-nazm al-makhsus) that express the intended meaning (al-ma'nd al-maqsud) in the most suitable way. His explanation thus relies on an indissoluble link between the linguistic expression and the meaning of the Qur'anic text. The highest degree of excellence that characterises this perfect analogy between expression and meaning is rationally proven through a comprehensive comparison to other literary products on the basis of linguistic categories. The Isma'ili focus on esoteric meanings as the major value of the Qur'an undermines the very roots of this debate.

### 2.3.3 The Isma'ili Concept of the Qa'im and Resurrection

#### The Criticism in the Ithbat

At the end of the paragraph on the bdtirij al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah mentions an example of false interpretation of Qur'anic terms, namely the word "qiyama":

"And they deny the resurrection (al-ba 'th wa-l-nushur) and say that the meaning of al-qiyama is the return (qiyam) of Muhammad b. Ismail b. Ja'far and his rise [to the imamate] (khurujuhu)." "

The Zaydi imam states that the Isma'ilis wrongly believe that qiyama refers to the coming of Muhammad b. Isma'il as the qd'im and deny resurrection. Which Isma'ili concept lies behind this?

#### The Isma'ili Concept of the Qa'im and Resurrection

Isma'ili thinkers perceive the development of humankind as a cyclical salvific history (Heilsgeschichte). This process started with Adam and will - in the end - lead humanity to ultimate salvation. The speaking-prophets continuously help humanity on their path to spiritual perfection through their teaching of the divine laws. They follow each other in consecutive cycles (sg. dawr), each of which inaugurates a new era. At the time of al-Mu'ayyad, it is still the era of Muhammad, the sixth ndtiq. The seventh one - in Isma'ili terminology referred to as al-qd'im ("the rising one") - is expected to come in the future. He will accomplish the salvific process and bring the cyclical history to an end. The qd'im will not bestow a new divine law upon his people, but instead will abrogate the law of Muhammad by disclosing its entire esoteric truths (haqd'iq). Al-Sijistmi, for example, notes in his Kitdb Ithbdt al-nubuwwdt:

"The qa'im is the ultimate end of all the prophets and he unites the different laws (yajma' bayn al-nawamis al-mukhtalifa) ... through uncovering their truths (kashf 'an haqa'i-qiha]...

Most Isma'ili scholars clearly locate the appearance of the qd'im in the far future. But the early Isma'iliyya disagreed about the identity and exact role of the qd'im. At some point, members of the Qaramita believed that Muhammad b. Isma'il, the grandson of Ja'far al-Sadiq and seventh imam in the era of the Prophet Muhammad, actually was the qd'im who just awaited his forthcoming return in occultation.

#### Assessment of al-Mu'ayyad bi-Uah's Criticism and Other Refutations

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah must have been informed about this viewpoint, which is why

he criticises the belief in Muhammad b. Isma'il as the qd'im. But why does he stress that this understanding denies resurrection (al-ba'th wa-l-nushur)? According to Isma'ili thinking, the qd'im opens the "cycle of unveiling" (dawr al-kashf) in which prophets or imams are no longer needed, since the divine knowledge in its entirety will be immediately accessible to the human souls. But only those who grasp the unveiled Truth will reach paradise, which is perceived as being next to the First Intellect, while those who keep adhering to the religious law will end up in hell, which is perceived as the remotest place from it. This purely spiritual concept of resurrection contrasts with the eschatological image of other Islamic currents that interpret al-qiyama as the resurrection of the souls and the bodies after death for to receive the final judgement before they are sent to paradise or hell. "

Judging from the citation of al-Mu'ayyad, again we can only speculate whether he had a deeper understanding of the Isma'ili vision of the presence of the qd'im or whether he merely criticised the exaltation of Muhammad b. Isma'il. But he seems to have been well aware of the different notions of resurrection that separated his creed from the Isma'ili one. Al-Jishumi, too, referred to the misinterpretation of "al-qiyama" and other false descriptions of the afterlife.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The analysis of the refutation of the Isma'iliyya has shown that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah made use of Isma'ili terminology, but also relied on typical anti-Isma'ili keywords and topics. His critique is neither a coherent presentation of authentic Isma'ili doctrines nor mere polemic. He intends to present the Isma'iliyya as dangerous heretics; their heretical teachings can be summarised as follows:

(1) First, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah criticises the Isma'ili notion of God that commits ta'til and negates true tawhid. His conclusion that this implies a negation of God does not accord with Isma'ili teaching, but it fits well his purpose to present the Isma'iliyya as severe heretics. (2) Second, he targets the Isma'ili notion of revelation, understood as inspiration of the eternal truths emanating from the First Intellect and its later transformation by the prophet into a written law. In his eyes, this understanding fundamentally contradicts the notion of a prophet being sent by God to reveal His textual message. (3) Third, the concept of esoteric meanings concealed in the exoteric word of the Scripture conflicts with the notion of the Qur'an as God's definite law containing unambiguous commandments. As a consequence, al-Mu'ayyad imputes to the Isma'ilis the abolishment of the law. As a conclusion from these teachings, the devastating assessment of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah is evident. By demonstrating that the Isma'iliyya deny or misunderstand the fundamental Islamic doctrines of tawhid, nubuwwa and shar' he regards them as non-Muslims and highlights their heretical identity.

Behind these explicit reprovals, I believe that the following concern of al-Mu'ayyad can be culled from between the lines: The Isma'ili system of thought

is supra-rational and thus, in the eyes of the Zaydi imam, constitutes a dangerous attack on Islam as a rationally justifiable religion. "" Allusions to some central conflict lines between Isma'ili and Mu'tazili-Zaydi theology and prophetology demonstrate this:

(1) The Isma'ili notion of God, which is based on the double negation of all characteristics and conceptions, contradicts the description of God by rationally justified attributes as it had been developed in the tradition of the Mu'tazila followed by many Zaydi theologians. With the negation of two opposites, the Isma'ili concept of the Divine transcends the boundaries of human understanding and logic. (2) Second, through the Isma'ili concept of ta'yid as an inspiration with supra-rational knowledge, miracles lose their legitimizing power as rational proofs of prophecy. (3) Finally, by claiming superior knowledge for the imam that is only transmitted secretly to initiated persons precludes an open debate among scholars and believers based on rational arguments. It demotes the prophets with their rational proofs in favour of the imams with their hidden non-verifiable teachings. According to Isma'ili notions of emanation, the sphere of the *zahir* is the sphere of human reason and rational thinking. The esoteric truths, in contrast, transcend this realm. That is what al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah alludes to, when he notes that the Isma'ilis believe that there is a truth behind that, what Muslims consider rational arguments. The concept of *Vjdz al-Qufdn* as the core proof of prophecy is severely questioned by the teaching of the *bdtn*.

In the eyes of the Zaydi imam, these supra-rational teachings are dangerous, because they are not self-evident, especially for uneducated people. This assessment accords with the concern often expressed by anti-Isma'ili authors, namely that the Isma'ilis pretend to belong to (Shi'ite) Islam and deceive potential new adherents. They considered Isma'ili teachings more difficult to unmask as heresy than blatant unbelief or atheism. This seems to be one of the reasons why the Isma'ilis were perceived as a major threat by many rational theologians.

## V Intellectual Defence 2: Prophetology

### 1 Introduction

In response to the challenges of prophecy and its rational justification represented by Isma'ili prophetology, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah did not choose to compose a *Radd 'aid l-Ismd'Viyya*, which would have included a comprehensive description and refutation of Isma'ili doctrines. Instead, he opted for an *Ithbdt nubuwat al-nabU* a rational proof of Muhammad's prophecy. Apparently, to him, this seemed more appropriate for dispelling the doubts raised.

In the whole text of the *Ithbdtj* he applies the prophetological tradition. Theological reflections on the veracity of prophecy had begun at the latest in the second Islamic century. In the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries the debate went on and the rationalist theologians developed a coherent prophetological doctrine. By al-Mu'ayyad's time, "proofs of prophecy" had been established as a central component of comprehensive theological thinking. Al-Mu'ayyad could draw on a rich



treasure of solid arguments and his argumentation reflects earlier and contemporary debates. Even though al-Mu'ayyad cites only few texts by name, it is evident that he had access to the relevant prophetological literature. This may be inferred not only from his educational background in Kaldm, but is also internally evident. In this chapter, I first review the *Kitdb al-Hujaj fi tathbit al-nubuwwa* by Abu 'Uthman 'Amr b. Bahr al-Jahiz (d. 255/868-9). The Basran Mu'tazili was one of the early protagonists of the prophetological debate, whose texts are partly extant. His *Kitdb al-Hujaj* is the only prophetological text cited by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah. Secondly, the references to Ibn al-Rawandi, whose name stands for the criticism of prophecy (among other heretical ideas), receive an in-depth examination, since al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah explicitly refers to him. Thirdly, I review other prophetological material that is not cited in the *Ithbdtj* but can (partly) be considered a source. Finally, I assess al-Mu'ayyad's own contribution, by way of example, on the basis of an analysis of some individual lines of argument. This is done by comparing these arguments in the *Ithbdt* to their use in other prophetological texts.

## 2 Al-Jahiz: *Kitab al-Hujaj fTtathbJt al-nubuwwa*

Al-Mu'ayyad refers to a text by al-Jahiz entitled (1) *Kitdb al-Farq [md] bayna l-nabi wa-l-mutanabbL*. A text with this title is not extant, but the title is confirmed by al-Jahiz himself in his *Kitdb al-Hayawdn*, where he lists some of his own books. There, the *Kitdb al-Farq md bayna l-nabi wa-l-mutanabbi* is further described by the words "al-farq md bayna l-hiyal wa-l-makhdriq" ("the difference between frauds and tricks")- The title is also listed by Ibn al-Nadim. Al-Jahiz refers back to this text again in volume four of his *Kitdb al-Hayawdn*, namely in a passage entitled "Musaylima, the Liar (Musaylima al-khadhdhdb\ in which he describes the life and the method of deception used by this "false prophet"/ At the end of the chapter he says:

"We have already noted his [i.e. MusayUma's] story and the story of Ibn al-Nawwaha in the book, where we explained the difference between a prophet and someone claiming to be a prophet (fi kitMna alladhi dhakarna fihi fasl ma bayna l-nabi wa-l-mutanabbi). And we mentioned all false prophets (jamV al-mutanabbVin), each according to his virulence and the form in which he deceived. And we mentioned all their methods of deception (jumlat ihtiyMhim) and the fields in which they performed their fraudulent tricks (makhariq). If you want to know [more about] this group [of false prophets], read this book, it is available (mawjud)."

In addition to the *Kitdb al-Farq* al-Jahiz lists another book with regards to prophecy that bears the title (2) *Kitdb al-Hujaj fi tathbit al-nubuwwa* } Abu l-Husayn b. 'Uthman al-Khayyat (d. 300/912) is likely referring to this text in his *Kitdb al-Intisar*, when he cites it as *Kitdb fi ikhbdr wa-ithbdt al-nubuwwa*. Ibn al-Nadim mentions it as *al-Hujjat wa-l-nubuwwa* and Yaqut mentions a *Kitdb dald'il al-nubuwwaj* possibly referring to the same book. The title underwent changes in later references as well/ 'Abd al-Jabbar lists al-Jahiz (without referring to a

title) among those predecessors who wrote books about prophecy and miracles and praises him for having presented the prophetic miracle (Vjdz al-Qur'dn) as compulsory knowledge ('Urn darun)."

With regards to the Kitdb al-Hujaj Yaqt provides the following noteworthy remark: "" he mentions a tradition that goes back to Abu Bakr b. al-IkhshM (sic!), meaning perhaps the BaghdMi Mu'tazili Abu Bakr Ahmad b. 'All b. al-Ikhshid (d. 326/938) , who in turn refers to the double citation of the Kitdb al-Farq in al-Jahiz's Kitdb al-Hayawdn. Ibn al-Ikhshid is cited saying that al-Jahiz referred to his Kitdb al-Farq bayna l-nabi wa-l-mutanabbi and his Kitdb Dald'il al-nubuwwa separately Cald l-tafriqa). Ibn al-Ikhshid then reports that he tried to consult both books, but could only find the Kitdb Dald'il al-nubuwwaj which is why he surmised that the title al-Farq had been wrongly attributed to this very same book. The comments of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah on the "Kitdb al-Farq" lead to the same assumption, namely that he was in fact talking about the Kitdb al-Hujaj fi tathbit al-nubuwwa. He mentions it twice in Chapter 1.1 in the context of the tahaddi verses.

"And in his presentation... in the Kitab al-Farq bayna l-nabi wa-l-mutanabbi, al-Jahiz investigated the argument of the challenge (haqqaqa al-qawlf l-tahaddi), because he thought that it was not possible to deny it [i.e. the existence of the challenge verses].

At the end of the discussion on the tahaddi verses and the argument for why the knowledge of their existence had been necessary, al-Mu'ayyad states:

"And this matter had already been unequivocally investigated by Abu 'Uthman al-Jahiz in [his] [Kitab] al-Farq bayna l-nabi wa-l-mutanabbi."

As a conclusion from the above, we believe that the two books - (1) Kitdb al-Farq [md] bayna l-nabi wa-l-mutanabbi and (2) Kitdb al-Hujaj fi tathbit al-nubuwwa - did indeed exist, but that there was some confusion about their titles, including the citation in al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's Ithbdt. The reception of al-Jahiz's Kitdb al-Hujaj in the Ithbdt is studied separately. Whether al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah also had the Kitdb al-Farq - discussing "false prophets" such as Musaylima - at his disposal remains unclear. He wrote about Musaylima in Chapter 1.2, but there relies on sources other than the Kitdb al-Farq as we will see below.

### 3 Ibn al-Rawandl

#### 3.1 Introduction

The debate on prophecy was not limited to inner-Muslim discussions, but rather was strongly influenced by various intellectual currents. One of the most influ

ential ones originated from the heretics or freethinkers. The Islamic literature refers to them as mulhida (sg. mulhidj heretic) or zanddiq (sg. zindiq, freethinker, atheist). " They were a group of intellectuals who rejected all religions based on revelation, grounding their rejection on the assumption that the human intellect is a sufficient source of all knowledge. Denying the validity of prophecy was one of their central principles.

The heretic par excellence was Ibn al-Rawandi. Abu l-Husayn Ahmad b.

Yahya b. Ishaq al-Rawandi was born around the year 205/815 in Marwarrudh (or Marw al-Rudh), a city in Khurasan. He was a prominent member of the Mu'tazila in Baghdad and thus educated in rational theology, but later distanced himself from it and associated with non-Mu'tazills, Shi'Is and non-Muslims from various denominations including Manichaeans, Jews and perhaps also Christians.

Eventually Ibn al-Rawandi abandoned Islam and thereafter wrote critiques of Islamic dogmas, which is why in later sources his name became almost synonymous with a heretic. In this perspective he reappears in the Ithbdtj namely in the context of increasing heresy (ilhad) and the spread of the dualist movements Mdnawiyya and Daysdniyya during the reign of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 198-218/813-833)."

In his Fihrist , Ibn al-Nadim organises Ibn al-Rawandi's books in two different lists, apparently corresponding to the different orientations of this author. One contains books on various theological topics, including a Kitdb Ithbdt al-rusul and al-Radd 'aid al-Zanddiq. These titles were almost not mentioned by later scholars. In contrast to that, the titles of the second list that Ibn al-Nadim copied from al-Balkhl's Kitdb Mahdsin Khurdsdn and described as "execrable books" (al-kutub al-maruna) were frequently cited. All four titles mentioned by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah - viz. al-Tdj, al-Zumurrud, al-Ddmigh and al-Farid - appear in this second list. Ibn al-Rawandi's heretical writings had elicited many refutations and counter-attacks. Most of his writings and also of the refutations are lost. Next to al-Khayyat, among them there are the Mu'tazill scholars al-Jahiz, al-Balkhi, and - most importantly - the two Jubba'Is. Abu 'All's (d. 303/915-6) refutation of al-Tdj , al-Ddmigh and al-Zumurrud and Abu Hashim's (d. 321/933) Naqd al-Farid, are all also lost, though later references give some insights in their content as well as that of the original work of Ibn al-Rawandi. It is unlikely that al-Mu'ayyad had direct access to any original texts of Ibn al-Rawandi: rather, more likely he acquired his ideas through the refutations produced by his predecessors that, in turn, are preserved in the prophetological literature. The following overview discusses the various citations of Ibn al-Rawandi's books by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah.

### 3.2 Al'Taj - The Creation of the World Contested

The Kitab al-Taj in the Ithbat

The information on the Kitdb al-Tdj (Book of the Crown) provided in the Ithbdt is limited. Al-Mu'ayyad simply states that this book deals with the eternity of the world (qidam al- 'dlam).

## Fragments

The earliest and one of the most comprehensive accounts of the Kitdb al-Tdj is found in al-Khayyat's Kitdb al-Intisar, where he states:

"Among [Ibn al-Rawandl's heretical writings] is a book that is known as Kitab al-Taj, in which he declared the createdness of bodies (hadath al-ajsam) to be impossible, he denied it and claimed that the effect (al-athar) does not give evidence for the effector (al-mu'ath-thir) and the act (al-fa'il) does not give evidence for the actor (al-fa'il) and that the world with [all] what is in it, [...] its moon and all its stars is eternal, without the need for a maker (sani'), organiser (mudabbir), or creator (muhdith). Those who postulated an eternal creator (khaliq qadim) of the world, who has no equal, spoke absurdly and inconsistently." According to this description, the Kitdb al-Tdj was addressed to the classical proof of the existence of God as established by Abu l-Hudhayl al-'Allaf (d. ca. 227/841-2) and other Mu'tazili theologians. " It is based on four premises (da 'dwi):

(1) We perceive that accidents (a'rad), such as composition (ijtimd') separation (iftirdqj) motion (haraka) and rest (sukun) exist.

(2) These accidents are created (muhdath). '

(3) The bodies cannot be free of them nor do they precede these accidents.

(4) What cannot be free of, or precede, what is created, is likewise necessarily created. Thus, the bodies themselves are created (muhdath).

These four premises conclude that every created thing (muhdath) needs a creator (muhdith). Since the world is composed of bodies, it is created and thus needs a creator. This creator of the world is identified as God.

Ibn al-Rawandi denies this argument and maintains that one cannot conclude the createdness of bodies from the createdness of accidents. On the contrary, he believes that the visual appearance of bodies seems to indicate their eternity. This may be the reason why the later authors Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1200) and Ibn al-Murtada (d. 840/1436-7) - when they describe the content of the Kitdb al-Tdj - add the denial of the creator (nafy al-sdnV) to the denial of the createdness of the world. ""

## Conclusion

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah might implicitly infer the same. Since the proof of God is no particular issue in the Ithbdtj we do not go into further detail at this point. The title of the Kitdb al-Tdj is mentioned only by al-Mu'ayyad in the list of Ibn al-Rawandfs writings in order to underline his heretical identity. It fits into his general use of Ibn al-Rawandi for his argument, expressing that even such enemies of Islam as this arch-heretic, who went as far as denying the existence of God, did not deny the existence of the tahaddi verses - which are essential for the Vjdz doctrine.

Between the lines one can discover a second intention: Throughout the text, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah maintains the ideological closeness between the mulhida of the 3rd/9th century and the contemporary Isma'iliyya. Ibn al-Rawandfs denial of the createdness of the world is implicitly equated with the denial of the creator alleged to the Isma'iliyya in order to emphasise their heretical character. The

message seems to be: The negation of God is one of the many heretical teachings that the two groups have in common.

### 3.3 Al-Zumurrud-Prophecy Denied

#### The Kitab al-Zumurrud in the Ithbat

Secondly, Ibn al-Rawandi is credited for his Kitdb al-Zumurrud (Book of the Emerald) , in which he says - in the words of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah - that "the Prophet Muhammad exaggerated in using the Qur'an for his cause and claimed that the people were unable to bring forth something similar (... wa-qad atnaba Muhammad ... fi l-ihitidj li-nafsihi bi-l-Qur'dn wa-yu)(a'izu al-khalq 'anhu)". The Kitdb al-Zumurrud is cited once more with regards to the "the negation of prophecies (ibtal al-nubuwwdy\

#### Fragments

The Kitdb al-Zumurrud was the subject of numerous (now lost) refutations, including those of Abu 'All al-Jubba'i, al-Balkhi and Ibn al-Rawandi himself. Substantial passages of the text, often going back to these refutations, are found in the following sources:"" Al-Khayyat's Kitdb al-Intisdr, al-Maturidfs Kitdb al-Tawhidj 'Abd al-Jabbar's Tathbit dald'il al-nubuwwa and the MughnU Ibn al-Malahiml's Kitdb al-Fd'iq fi usul al-din and Ibn al-jawzl's al-Muntazam fi l-ta'rikh al-muluk wa-l-umam Interestingly, the Isma'ili missionary al-Mu'ayyad fi l-Din al-Shirazi (d. 470/1077-8) also referred to the text in his Majdlis al-Mu'ayyadiyya/\* On the basis of this text, in which al-Mu'ayyad fi l-Din refers to a refutation of the Zumurrud by another anonymous Isma'ili missionary (which is almost entirely preserved), Paul Kraus reconstructed important parts of the text to which the other references do not add significant information.""

#### Outline

The basis of Ibn al-Rawandfs critique in the Zumurrud is his conviction of the superiority of reason over any religious revelation."" In his view, reasoning is the only way to gain knowledge and the yardstick of all things. The Zumurrud points out what is usually referred to as the "dilemma of the Barahima"" : either revelation is dispensable if it corresponds with knowledge gained independently through rational thinking, or it is false in the case of contradiction. In the Kitdb al-Zumurrudj Ibn al-Rawandi verbally states:

"The Brahmans say: for us and for our adversaries it is certain that reason ('aql) is the greatest benefit from God for his creatures. It is through it [reason] that the Lord and his benevolence are known, and because of its command and prohibition, admonition and alert are correct. Therefore, if the messenger has come to confirm good and evil, duty and prohibition already provided by [reason], then we can omit to care about his authority or follow his

mission. Because through what is provided by reason, we can go without it and in this sense the prophetic mission is false. But if [his message] contradicts the judgement on good and evil, permission and prohibition, according to what is provided by reason, then we do not need to believe in his prophecy.

In addition to this general attack on revelation, Ibn al-Rawandi expresses critiques of the Islamic rites as being useless. The religious duties, such as the sacrifice of an animal, the daily five-time prayers or the detailed compulsory movements during the pilgrimage are examples for unnecessary knowledge, he maintains. Muslim theologians addressed this reproach with the following argument: If God is just and the salvation of the creature depends on the religious law, then the people have to know this law. The general knowledge provided by reason is not enough and has to be differentiated and concretised by detailed instructions on how to act. Therefore revelation is necessary."

The necessity of revelation is not discussed in the *Ithbdt*. But an interesting reference is provided in al-Bustf's *Kashf*, where he puts the "dilemma of the Barahima" into the mouth of the Isma'ilis. In his answer, al-Busti - while referring to "shuyukhund" - repeats the Mu'tazili argumentation based on God's justice and underlines its rational justification."

In addition to this general challenge of prophecy, the *Zumurrud* targets the idea that the credibility of a prophet is based on his ability to perform miracles. The critique addressed at the argument of miracles in this context includes the following aspects: Indisputable tradition (*tawdtur*) cannot be guaranteed, prophecies of future events or hidden knowledge faked by Muhammad is exposed as untrue or deceptive, and the Islamic dogma of the inimitability of the Qur'an is untenable, both with regards to form and content.

## Conclusion

The *Kitdb al-Zumurrud* attacks the fundamental argument of prophetology. It questions the necessity of revelation and addresses several objections at the proof of prophecy by miracles. Refutations to all the critical points advanced in the *Zumurrud* are found in the prophetological texts. The same set of arguments and counter-arguments is put forth in the *Ithbdtj* as the analysis of some of the main criticisms of Ibn al-Rawandi will show in the next chapter." Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah takes up many of these objections, without always referring them to the *Kitdb al-Zumurrud*. Once he refers to "al-Barahml" - probably alluding to the critique of prophecy put in the mouth of the Brahmans by Ibn al-Rawandi -, explaining that according to the latter no clear distinction can be drawn between a miracle and unexplainable natural phenomena (such as magnetism). " This is why the Brahmans deny miracles as proofs of prophecy and indeed prophecy as such, he argues, and answers this objection with the classical counter-argument that God has to exclude all possibility of doubt about his prophets and will therefore avoid any ambiguous signs; otherwise, humans could use these natural signs as false proofs.

We notice again the parallel between the denial of prophecy and its establishment through miracles by Ibn al-Rawandi and the Isma'iliyya (according to

al-Mu'ayyad's description).

### 3.4 Ai-Damigh - Critique of the Qur'an

#### The Kitab al-Damigh in the Ithbat

While in al-Zumurrud, Ibn al-Rawandi (mainly) aimed at damaging the trustworthiness of the Prophet, in al-Ddmigh (lit. "The skull-smasher" or "The brain-beater") concerning "abuses of the Qur'an" (matd'in al-Qur'dny , as al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah puts it, Ibn al-Rawandi targets the miracle of the Prophet.

Al-Mu'ayyad explains that the work's authorship was unclear ("wa-khtulifa fi musannifihi") but that it goes back to the Daysdniyya. 'Abd al-Jabbar likewise expressed doubts about whether Ibn al-Rawandi was the author of the Ddmigh and hinted that it might have been the work of a conspiring group and that it had simply been circulated under the name of Ibn al-Rawandi. " Elsewhere in the Tathbitj however, 'Abd al-Jabbar leaves no doubt of Ibn al-Rawandi's authorship of the Ddmigh.

#### Fragments

Nyberg first pointed to this book in the introduction to his edition of al-Khayyat's Kitdb al-Intisdr. On the authority of 'Abd al-Rahmin al-'AbbasI's (d. 963/1556) Ma 'dhid al-Tansis who refers to al-Balkhl's Mahdsin Khurdsdrij Nyberg lists a Kitdb al-Ddmigh fi l-radd 'aid l-Qur'dn and states that the work had been refuted three times, namely by al-Khayyat, Abu 'All al-Jubba'i and Ibn al-Rawandi himself. All these refutations have been lost, but passages of Abu 'All's Naqd al-Ddmigh survived in later works that appear to be the ultimate source referred to by all extant fragments of the Kitdb al-Ddmigh. This also applies to the references of 'Abd al-Jabbar (both in the Mughni and the Tathbit). The most comprehensive citations are preserved in Ibn al-jawzl's Muntazam. Hellmut Ritter believes that Ibn al-Jawzi was the last person to read original texts by Ibn al-Rawandi. He provides a reconstruction of the text on the basis of Ibn al-jawzl's Muntazam, in which we find citations from Abu 'All's refutation as well as from the original. " Stroumsa believes to have found additional fragments of the Kitdb al-Ddmigh in a book by the Zahirite scholar Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064). In his polemic epistle entitled al-Radd 'aid Ibn al-Naghрила al-YahudU Ibn Hazm refutes a book that Ibn al-Naghрила had written to refute the Qur'an. Stroumsa assumes that Ibn al-Naghрила never wrote a book against the Qur'an, but that Ibn Hazm took his citations from Abu 'All's refutation of the Kitdb al-Ddmigh.

#### Outline

Summarising the fragments (from 'Abd al-Jabbar's MughnU Ibn al-jawzl's Muntazam and Ibn Hazm's Radd 'aid Ibn al-Naghрила al-Yahudi)j we can state that in the Kitdb al-Ddmighj Ibn al-Rawandi imputed internal contradictions (al-mundqada) and inconsistencies within the Qur'an and described God in a ridiculous and absurd way. To this end, Ibn al-Rawandi lists seemingly conflicting Qur'anic

verses including

- mathematical errors, such as the number of days God needed to create the world ( $2+4+2 = 8$  in Q 41: 9-12 versus 6 days in Q 50: 38) , or the chronology of the creation of heaven and man (Q 2: 29 versus Q 79: 27-30) ,
- empirical flaws (such as the fact that God was described as having been praised by all and everything in Q 3: 83, Q 17: 44 and Q 16: 49, in contrast to the obvious existence of non-believers) ",
- contradictory information about the devil (indicating his strength in Q 58:19, 29: 38 and his weakness in Q 4: 76) , the Judgement Day (with regard to the potential for self-defence in Q 77:35 and Q16:111) , and the afterlife (including an unpleasant description of paradise as being filled with milk, honey, ginger, brocade and silk in Q 47:15, Q 76:17 and Q 44: 53) and
- unpleasant and inconsistent descriptions of God himself, in particular his immoral behaviour, including:
  - fraud and lies, when He announces that some will be punished and some forgiven, but makes man incapable of understanding and leads him astray (Q 18: 57), or mercy (Q 39: 53) and perdition (Q 40: 29) alike,
  - cruelty (such as the continuous burning of the skin, Q 4: 56) ,
  - disproportionality of his acts (when killing the Thamud because they had harmed a female camel, Q 7: 77-78) ", and
  - contradictory information about the extent of his knowledge. (He claims of knowing the unknown in Q 6:59, but does not know who will pray in the right direction in Q 2:143.)

The inconsistencies brought forward by Ibn al-Rawandi appear to be a rather random collection of Qur'anic verses. Abu 'All al-Jubba'i did not have much trouble refuting these criticisms, primarily by pointing to linguistic misunderstandings or by referring to the exegetical tradition.

## Conclusion

Although al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah mentions the title of the work without using its arguments and examples, the Kitdb al-Ddmigh is important for the context of the Ithbdt. In chapters 1.6 and 1.7, al-Mu'ayyad takes great effort to prove in detail the linguistic superiority of the Qur'anic composition. He not only mentions the stylistic excellence, but also presents the superb meaning of words and expressions. His explanation is addressed at all kinds of criticisms toward the language of the Qur'an, such as those by Ibn al-Rawandi mentioned in the Kitdb al-Ddmighj or those who disregard of the "exoteric appearance" (zdhir) of the Qur'anic word, as demonstrated by the Isma'ilis in their emphasis on the "inner meaning" (bdtin)/

## 3.5 Al-Farld - Distinguishing Between a Genius and a Prophet

### The Kitab al-Farld in the Ithbat

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah warns the reader that "when Ibn al-Rawandi composed the book entitled al-Farid he formulated rules, provided and cited the useful and the



useless about the abuse of the prophethood of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and denied many of the traditions of the Muslims". Al-Farid is described a second time as a book that "treats the abuse of the prophecies of our Prophet (peace be upon him) and the calumny against his miracles". Though the Kitdb al-Farid is cited in chapters 1.1 and 1.2, its arguments are largely discussed in chapter 1.4 of the Ithbdt in the context of the definition of a miracle.

### Fragments and Outline

Rashed has gathered a list of later prophetological texts that rely on Abu Hashim's (lost) Naqd al-FandJ The reconstruction from the surviving fragments demonstrates that the Kitdb al-Fand (lit. Book of the Unique) challenges the Qur'an as evidence of prophecy. Ibn al-Rawandfs argument can be summarised as follows: If the fundamental proof of Muhammad's prophecy is the inimitability of the Qur'an, then scholars such as Euclid and Ptolemy are also prophets, since their famous books are likewise inimitable. In other words, the argument asks for a way to distinguish between the works of a genius and works that arise through divine inspiration.

In this context, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah discusses the following examples of literary excellence in detail:

Euclid (UqMis)j [Elements]: In the sources, Euclid, the famous Greek mathematician who lived around 300 B. C. in Alexandria, is always mentioned without reference to a specific work. Al-Mu'ayyad adds that, at the time of Euclid, the discipline of geometry had reached a peak (balagha al-ghdya) and that Euclid was a leading master. Al-Mu'ayyad may have referred to Euclid's masterpiece Elements, a mathematical and geometric treatise consisting of 13 volumes that was first translated into Arabic around 183/800 and discussed among the Mu'tazila and other Islamic scholars.

Ptolemy (Batlamiyus), Almagest (al-Majisti): The Syntaxis Mathematica or Great Mathematical Compendium by the Alexandrian astronomer Claudius Ptolemy (d. ca. 180 B. C.) consisted of 13 volumes and is regarded as the standard manual on Greek astronomy that widely influenced the development of astronomy among the Arabs. It was translated several times into Arabic in the late 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries and received a series of redactions and commentaries."

Galen (Jdlinus) (d. ca. 199 B. C.): The famous and prolific writer from Greek antiquity was widely received by Arab scientists. No specific work is mentioned by al-Mu'ayyad. He simply states that Jdlinus was an outstanding expert in the field of medicine - using the same expression as in the case of Euclid (balagha al-ghdya).

Imru' al-Qays: This pre-Islamic poet (d. ca. 550 B. C.) was one of the great masters whose poems were still praised and collected towards the end of the 2nd/8th century and widely transmitted. He is often presented as a model and benchmark in the field of poetry.

Sibawayh: The Kitdb Sibawayhi as it is referred to in Islamic literature in

lieu of a genuine title, is widely acknowledged as the founding text of Arabic grammatical science. Its author - Abu Bishr 'Amr b. 'Uthman b. Qanbar Sibawayhi (d. ca. 180/796) - is of Persian origin, who studied Arabic in Basra.

Khalil b. Ahmad, the 'Ariid: Khalil b. Ahmad (d. btw. 160/776-7 and 175/791), teacher of Sibawayh and one of the founders of Arabic linguistic, is (among other things) famous for developing a metric system that had been widely adopted by the time of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah. His Kitdb al- 'Arud has not survived, but its content, may be deduced from later works.""

- Ibn Muqla: Abu 'All Muhammad b. Muqla (d. 328/940) was a famous calligrapher and is credited with inventing the so-called al-khatt al-mansub ("proportioned script") style. In his Risala fi I- Vm al-khatt wa-l-qalanij he describes the foundations of calligraphy on the basis of geometrical forms. As is true for the other books of Ibn al-Rawandi, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah received this list of excellent books (or their authors) that, in his Farid, Ibn al-Rawandi contrasted with the Qur'an through the prophetological literature.

## Conclusion

The fundamental criticism that underpins the argument of the Farid is the claim of the linguistic inimitability of the Qur'an. While the Kitdb al-Ddmigh targets the content and linguistic composition of the Qur'an, the Kitdb al-Farid questions the virtual inimitability of the Qur'an in its capacity as "proofing miracle" for prophecy.

Although al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah does not draw an explicit link to the Isma'iliyya, his critiques suggest the following consideration: Ibn al-Rawandi (according to the Kitdb al-Farid) and the Isma'ilis (according to al-Mu'ayyad's description) put Muhammad on a level with other outstanding thinkers or scientists who composed great oeuvres. With this attitude, both devalue the Prophet and the Qur'an, negate Vjdz al-Qufdn as a miracle providing evidence for Muhammad's prophecy and have to be seen as severe heretics.

## 3.6 Conclusion: Sources and Function

Ibn al-Rawandi is an important character in the prophetological discourse. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah most likely received his criticisms and the counterarguments through the indicated texts of his mainly Mu'tazili predecessors. He uses the books of the heretic for three reasons:

First, the refutation of Ibn al-Rawandi's critical writings fits in with al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's general defence of Muhammad's prophecy. Basically he repeats the well established counter-arguments. Second, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah uses Ibn al-Rawandi to support a specific argument, namely the proof that the Qur'an has never been imitated. In the first passage (Ch. 1.1), he argues that despite all Ibn al-Rawandi's abuse of the Prophet and his denial of many traditions of Muslims, the heretic

did not deny the existence of the tahaddi verses. In the second reference (Ch. 1.2), al-Mu'ayyad adduces Ibn al-Rawandi's critical books as proof of the absence of an imitation of the Qur'an. He argues that if these heretical treatises including the harsh critique of Muhammad and the Qur'an and even a total denial of prophethood had been transmitted, "how can one believe that the transmission of the imitation of the Qur'an - if there had been one - had been hidden (...)" . Finally al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah implicitly constructs a parallel between Ibn al-Rawandi and the Isma'iliyya. After listing the heretical books of Ibn al-Rawandi, he states:

"And the Batiniyya expanded their efforts and increased their expenses for their longing to deny God's unity (tawhid) and the prophecies (nubuwwat). And if they found a way to [do] it, they would have reached [their aim] through what they possess from new or old (min tdrif aw-talidin)"

Similarly, 'Abd al-Jabbar repeatedly stresses the use of the books of Ibn al-Rawandi by the Shi'i propagandists, i.e. Isma'ilis and states that - with regards to the hatred against the prophets - the Bdtiniyya and groups of the Qardmita "take the same way as the zanddiqa of former times, including Ibn al-Rawandi, al-Warraaq [and others]". The message of such statements seem to imply the following conclusion: About a century before al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah, Ibn al-Rawandi and his colleagues were the enemies of Islam who aimed at destroying the religion with their writings; at the time of al-Mu'ayyad it is the Isma'iliyya. Both share the same heretical ideas, which can be summarised as a parallel to Ibn al-Rawandi's books: (a) The denial of the createdness of the world and thus of God the creator, as discussed in the Kitdb al-Tdj, (b) the denial of prophecy, as mentioned in the Kitdb al-Zumurrudj and (c) the questioning of the Vjdz al-Qufdn as Muhammad's core miracle, as expressed in the Kitdb al-Ddmigh and the Kitdb al-Farid. These three challenges correspond to al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's reproach of the Isma'iliyya and their alleged anti-Islamic doctrines, namely (a) the double negative theology leading to the denial of the creator, (b) the concept of ta'yid that equals the denial of prophecy, and (c) the teaching of the bdtin only understood by the imams that damages the concept of i'jdz al-Qur'dn.

#### 4 Other Prophetological Texts

The Mu'tazili theologian Abu l-Hudhayl al-'Allaf is the earliest author indicated by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah. " However, he only mentions him in general as a mutakallim without referring to his oeuvre. Nonetheless it is rather likely that he knew some of his writings. 'Abd al-Jabbar lists Abu l-Hudhayl among those early Basran theologians "who established the knowledge of Muhammad's prophethood as compulsory knowledge (Vm daruri). Ibn al-Nadim records one or possibly two prophetological titles, namely 'Aldmdtsidq al-rasul and al-HujjUj of which the latter is, of course, too equivocal for a definitive judgement. Next to texts dedicated entirely and specifically to "proofs of prophecy", which developed as an individual literary genre, usually bearing such titles as

"The Signs of Prophecy" (Aldm al-nubuwwa)j "Establishing (the Proof of) Prophecy" (Ithbdt al-nubuwwa)j and the like, there are comprehensive theological summae that included discussions of prophecy. The corpus involved is a complex network of interrelated texts that has only been started to be revealed. Many texts are lost, others are available only in the form of manuscripts, and a few links are still missing. As we will see, Mu'tazili authors from the Zaydi community played a significant role in the continuing prophetological debate. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's Kitdb Ithbdt nubuwat al-nabi is a contribution and also a reflection on that debate.

#### 4.1 Ibn Kallad's Kitab ai-Usui and Its Reception in the Zaydi Community

Abu 'All Muhammad b. Khallad al-Basri, who died in the 2nd half of the 4th/10th century, was one of the leading theologians of the Bahshamiyya. He wrote a Kitdb al-Usul together with an autocommentary: Shark al-usul. Neither text is extant, but substantial parts survived in later recensions from the pen of Zaydi authors, which are reviewed in the following. "" The Kitdb al-Usul with its Shark contained a systematic exposition of Mu'tazilite doctrine including the views of Ibn Khallad's teacher Abu Hashim al-Jubba'i and references to the latter's Naqd al-Farid. 'Abd al-Jabbar composed a completion of Ibn Khallad's Sharhj entitled Takmilat Sharh al-Usulj which is also lost. He also wrote a commentary to Ibn Khallad's Kitdb al-UsuU entitled Sharh al-Usulj which has also not come down to us.

##### Abu RashTd ai-NTsaburT: Ziyadat al-Sharh and its Commentaries

Next to 'Abd al-Jabbar's Sharhj a second important commentary on Ibn Khallad's Kitdb al-Usul was composed by 'Abd al-Jabbar's disciple and his successor as head of the Bahshamiyya Abu Rashid al-Nisaburi (d. 460/1068). The text entitled Ziydddt al-Sharh was long thought to be lost, but substantial parts were found in the following three commentaries that have recently been discovered and/or identified.

(1) The first one was composed by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's brother al-Natiq bi-l-haqq. In his Ziydddt Shark al-usuP, which is completely preserved in a manuscript in Leiden, al-Natiq summarises important parts of the original Ziydddt al-Sharh of al-Nisaburi. The editors Adang, Madelung and Schmidtke demonstrate that the text also contains direct references to Ibn Khallad's Sharh al-usul and most likely also to 'Abd al-Jabbar's Takmilat sharh al-usul. Contrary to the suggestions by Gimaret and Rashed, they do not believe they have found references to 'Abd al-Jabbar's Sharh al-usul.

(2) A second commentary on Ibn Khallad's Kitdb al-usul is partially extant in different manuscripts and has a complex story: (a) A fragment that is preserved at the Great Mosque Library in Sanaa " was first edited by Muhammad' Abd al-Hadi Abu Rida, who believed the text was a supercommentary on Ibn Khallad and attributed it to Abu Rashid al-Nisaburi as his Diwdn al-usul. It contains most of the

first part of the work, namely a discussion of God's unicity and was therefore published under the title "Fz l-tawhid\" (b) A second fragment of the same commentary, preserved at the British Library, was first described by Arthur S. Tritton " and later partly edited by Richard Martin/"" Martin suggests that the text belonged to al-Nisaburi's Ziydddt al-Sharh, while Gimaret took it for an anonymous text. " Recently, Ansari and Schmidtke proposed an alternative identification. The two scholars found references to Abu Rashid al-Nisaburi's younger contemporaries al-Sharif al-Murtada (d. 436/1044) and Ibn Mattawayh (d. 469/1076) (in particular the latter's al-Tadhkira) and therefore suggest that the two manuscripts ((a) Sanaa and (b) British Library) are not part of Abu Rashid's Ziydddt al-Sharh. Instead they proposed the authorship of a certain 'All b. al-Husayn b. Muhammad al-Daylami Siyah [Shah] Sarijan [Sarbijan], " a Zaydi scholar whose teacher, Abu 'All al-Hasan b. 'All al-Saffar, belonged to the circle of 'Abd al-Jabbar, and who is credited with a work entitled Shark al-Usul al-kabir. On the basis of a comparison with the other texts of the tradition mentioned above, Ansari and Schmidtke tentatively suggest that the British Library manuscript (b) is a later redaction of Abu Rashid's Ziydddt al-Sharh Ibn Khallad's autocommentary and 'Abd al-Jabbar's Shark al-usul or of his Takmilat Shark al-usul. Another source may have been Mankdim's Ta'liq Sharh al-usul al-khamsa. Accordingly, they suggest as a title of the whole work: Ta'liq Sharh al-Usul al-kabir (Supercommentary to the Commentary of al-Usul al-kdbir). The part preserved in the British Library Manuscript (b) contains the chapter on prophecy (Bdb al-nubuwwa).

(3) A third commentary to Ibn Khallad's Kitdb al-Usul of Zaydi provenance was recently discovered in a collective manuscript copied during the second half of the 7th/13th century and preserved at the library of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Shiraz ('Allama Tabataba'i Library). We mention it for the sake of completeness, despite its late date. The discoverers Ansari and Schmidtke state that it was composed or noted down by one Abu Tahir b. 'All al-Saffar, about whom no biographical information is available. It contains a Ta'liq on Ibn Khallad's Kitdb al-Usul which shows no direct reference to the original, but repeated references to Abu Rashid al-Nisaburi's Ziydddt al-Sharh. Ansari and Schmidtke assume that the material the author had at his disposal differed from the material of the supercommentaries by al-Natiq and Siyah. However, the chapter on prophecy shows important parallels with the Ziydddt of al-Natiq. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the text contains numerous references to al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah.

#### 4.2 'Abd al-Jabbar's Kitab al-Usul al-khamsa and Its Zaydi Commentaries

Finally, and independently of the network of texts presented so far, we have to mention 'Abd al-Jabbar's Kitdb al-Usul al-khamsa together with an autocommentary Shark al-Usul al-khamsa , not to be confused with his Shark to Ibn Khallad's Kitdb al-Usul. Both "Sharks" are lost. But 'Abd al-Jabbar's Sharh to his Kitdb al-Usul al-khamsa later received further commentaries, again by two Zaydi authors.

(1) The first one is Mankdim's *Ta'liq Sharh al-Usul al-khamsaj* edited by 'Abd al-Karim 'Uthman, who wrongly attributed the text to 'Abd al-Jabbar. "" The text presents a comprehensive explanation of the five themes of the *Kitdb al-Usul al-khamsa* by 'Abd al-Jabbar, furnished with a commentary. (2) A second, rather late Zaydi commentary of 'Abd al-Jabbar's *Sharh al-usul al-khamsa* was written by Abu Muhammad Isma'il b. 'All al-Farrazadhi (fl. late 5th/11th and early 6th/12th centuries). Al-Farrazadhi's *Taliqj* which is extant in one manuscript in Sanaa, was strongly inspired by the one of Mankdim/

#### 4.3 Al-Mu'ayyad bi-Uah's Reception

The tradition of texts on *al-usul al-khamsa* consists of original texts, commentaries and supercommentaries. The reciprocal references are often multidimensional, and the identification of the relationship between the various layers and texts is a difficult task. Neither Ibn Khallim's *Kitdb al-Usulj* nor his *Sharh* with 'Abd al-Jabbar's *Takmila*, nor the latter's own *Sharh al-Usul al-khamsa* are extant. But the preserved texts and commentaries, namely al-Natiq's *Ziydddt* and Siyah's *Ta'liq*, as well as 'Abd al-Jabbar's *Kitdb al-Usul al-khamsa* with Mankdim's *Ta'liq* convey a good idea about the character of these works. On the one hand, they provide information about the opinions of the earlier scholars; on the other hand, they document the later development of the prophetological debate. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's *Ithbdt nubuwwat al-nabi* has to be evaluated against this background. With regards to the debate on Ibn al-Rawandi, Rashed has already indicated that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah draws on Ibn Khallim's *Kitdb al-Usul* and 'Abd al-Jabbar's *Sharh al-Usul*. In light of the recent findings, we can add that it is likewise possible that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah received the ideas of Ibn Khallad's *Kitdb al-Usul* only through its commentaries, both that of 'Abd al-Jabbar and that of Abu Rashid al-Nisaburi's *Ziydddt al-Sharh*.

In fact, the biographer al-Muhalli notes about al-Mu'ayyad, that he has studied "the *Sharh* tradition" and "wrote his *Ziydddt al-Sharh* in Isfahan upon Qddi al-Quddt at the reading of someone else (...wa 'allaqa *Ziydddt al-Sharh bi-Isfahdn 'an Qddi al-Quddt bi-qird'ati ghayrihiY*'. " The passage is ambiguous. Rashed believes that this might indicate that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah wrote a commentary to the *Sharh* of 'Abd al-Jabbar with the same title (*Ziydddt*) as al-Mu'ayyad's brother al-Natiq. Rashed notes: "It may mean that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah commented upon 'Abd al-Jabbar's commentary on the basis of the reading of the text by someone else, not the Qadi himself." " Gimaret indicates that the formula "'allaqa ... 'an" means rather that somebody noted down in written form the comments (*Ziydddt al-Sharh*) of 'Abd al-Jabbar (at the reading of someone else) , which seems to me the more convincing solution. At any rate, al-Muhallfs comment indicates that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah was well acquainted with these texts.

#### 4.4 Texts on *rjaz al-Qur'an* focusing on the linguistic rationale

Next to these texts on prophecy we have to focus on works about the core prophetological proof, the theory of *i'jdz al-Qur'dn*. In fact, in particular the 4th/10th century witnessed a refinement of the *Vjdz* theory, that focused increasingly on a literary rationale. "" Protagonists of this development were often theologians who were at the same time scholars of Arabic literature and grammar, such as the Mu'tazillis 'All b. 'Isa al-Rummani (d. 384/994) and Hamd b. Muhammad al-Khattabi (d. ca. 386/996), both of whom emphasised the linguistic superiority of the Quran in their writings. Important contributions also came from Ash'ari thinkers. The leading Ash'ari theologian of the time, Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013) wrote various books on the question, most importantly his *Pjaz al-Qur'dn*, *al-Intisdr li-l-Qur'dn*, and *al-Baydn 'an al-farq bayna l-mu'jizdt wa-l-kardmdt wa-l-hiyal wa-l-kahdna*. In these writings he argues in detail that the Qur'anic miracle is mainly based on its inimitable composition and linguistic superiority (*nazm* and *baldgha*). As we will see, although al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's structure and focus of his argument are different from al-Baqillani's, he shares some interesting details with his Ash'ari contemporary.

The synopsis of texts that contain relevant prophetological material shows that the debate about proofs of prophecy was still significant at the time of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah and in the Zaydi community. The passages on prophecy in the four (partly) extant *summae* and commentaries present a treasure of prophetological arguments that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah adduces to in similar ways in his *Ithbdt*. Together with 'Abd al-Jabbar's other works (mentioned above) and the texts on the linguistic rationale of the *i'jdz*, they form the textual basis for the analysis of al-Mu'ayyad's arguments. However, since al-Mu'ayyad - in most cases - does not indicate his sources, it is almost impossible to identify exactly what texts he had at his disposal when he composed the *Ithbdt*.

## 5 Prophetological Arguments in the *Ithbat*

### 5.1 Introduction

In his effort to provide evidence for the inimitability of the Qur'an (*Vjdz al-Qur'dn*) as prophetic proof, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah basically follows what had become the standard rationale of the *Vjdz* doctrine as established by his predecessors. He admits that an original contribution to the debate is not what he is aiming at:

"I do not seek to add anything to what the forefathers (*al-salaf*) (God have mercy upon them) have said about this issue. But I will summarise from their (God's mercy be upon them) teachings what had been explained of various sides and I will present what had been abridged of secret objectives.""

His argumentation opens (in the Introduction following the anti-Isma'ili passages) with an outline of the history of the prophets and their signs" and contin

ues (in Chapter One) with a discussion of the Vjdz al-Qufdn in two perspectives: the historical circumstances of its appearance (Ch. 1.1-1.4) and the miraculous character of the Qur'anic text (Ch. 1.5-1.7). The description of the historical genesis of the Vjdz miracle includes the challenge (tahaddi) of the Arabs to bring something similar (Ch. 1.1) and their failure to create such an imitation (mu 'drado) (Ch. 1.2). This provides evidence for their inability (ta'adhdhur) to imitate the Qur'an (Ch. 1.3), which is defined as the principal condition for the Qur'an to be considered a miracle (mu'jiza) (Ch. 1.4).

While it was beyond dispute among the theologians that the miracle of the Qur'an consisted of its factual inimitability by the Arabs, there was much controversy about what constitutes this inimitability. One explanation was that God hindered the people to imitate the Qur'an by taking away from them the ability to do so. This opinion, which is known under the concept of "prevention" (sar/a), was first attributed to al-Nazzam and later defended by members of the Baghdad Mu'tazila and the Imam! community." Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah discusses and rejects the sar/a-theory." Much more common than this theory were explanations that traced the inimitability of the Qur'an back to its unsurpassable character. These explanations emphasised its incomparable rhetorical perfection (fasdha), the harmony between its structural and literary elements (al-ta'lifwa-l-nazm) or the hidden knowledge (ghuyub) revealed in the Qur'an.

The state of debate is reflected in the composition of the Ithbdt: In Chapter 1.5 al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah takes up the different views and concludes that the Qur'anic miracle is established on both its harmonious composition and linguistic purity (al-nazm wa-l-fasdha jamVdn). Chapter 1.6 demonstrates - on the basis of an analysis of linguistic devices - how the Qur'an belonged to the highest level of eloquence (aid tabaqdt al-fasdha). Finally, Chapter 1.7 discusses the revelation of the hidden knowledge (ikhbdr al-ghuyub).

I do not provide an analysis of the whole Vjdz argument as presented by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah. Instead, by way of example I have selected some lines of arguments that support the i 'jdz rationale in order to illustrate the author's way of arguing, and to make the link between the prophetological texts and the Ithbdt nubuwat al-nabi evident. The selection is mainly derived from the structure of the text and the mentioned sources. I focus on arguments presented in the Introduction and Chapters 1.1.-1.4 and leave a close analysis of the remaining chapters to prospective research. A comparison in particular of Chapters 1.5 and 1.6 with the writings of those authors who focus on a linguistic examination, seems to promise interesting insights.

## 5.2 Argument 1: The History of the Prophets and Their Signs

The first argument is based on a comparison of the Vjdz al-Qur'dn to the miracles of other prophets. The outline of the history of the prophets and their miracles begins with Adam and ends with Muhammad. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah presents the specific historical circumstances of each prophet and the signs with which he convinced the people of his truthfulness. The whole historical process is described



as a constant effort of God to lead humankind towards belief. Whenever unbelief has grown, a new prophet equipped with a convincing sign is sent. The length of the timespan (fatra) between two prophets reflects the persuasive power of their signs. The following paraphrases of al-Mu'ayyad's argument enable us to assess his perspective on the function of prophetic signs:

At the time of Adam (Adam), the father of humankind (abu l-bashar) and the first human being (awwal al-ins), unbelief and doubt about his command (amr) or his signs (ayat) did not exist. It is not until 950 years later that this certainty was disturbed/ At that moment, God sent Noah (NuJf) with the order to restore the veneration of the one God (tawhid). Since this did not bring the desired success, He sent the great flood that should recover the original state of untroubled belief at the time of Adam. But this situation lasted only for 700 years, because the memory of unbelief was still present among the people and let them go astray more quickly.

This is why God next sent Abraham (Ibrahim) and furnished him with "the leaves" (al-suhuf). But it did not help much, unbelief increased even more rapidly.

Therefore, after only 400 years it was time to send a new prophet: Moses (Musa). He brought the Torah (al-Tawrat) containing clear commandments. But the Israelites were again mislead, unbelief increased and the period between the prophets shortened. Unmistakable signs were needed, which is why God installed upon Moses the following miraculous deeds: the turning of a staff (al-'asa) into a serpent, Moses' hand turning white (al-yad al-baydd\ lit. "the white hand") and the crossing of the sea by the Israelites after Moses had parted it ("mujawaza Bani Isra'il al-bahr ba'd an anfalaqa al-bahr") } Due to "the persuasive power and mightiness of Moses' signs and the Book (i.e. the Torah) (Izam ayat Musa wa- 'izam al-kitab)", the timespan between Moses and the next prophet lasted for 1000 years.

However, after this period unbelief and heresy spread again (as a result of philosophy) and God sent Jesus (isa). The period between Jesus and Muhammad expanded over the middle length of 600 years. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-Ilah indicates two antagonistic reasons for this development: On the one hand, God's persistent proofs (hujaj Allah) were numerous, including the Scriptures al-Tawrdt, al-Zabur and al-Injil. But on the other hand, the strayings from the right path were also serious, because Jews and Christians disagreed about the figure of Jesus. Finally, with Muhammad, God set the seal on prophecy ("khatama bihi al-risdla"). Since then 400 years passed, which is why, al-Mu'ayyad bi-Ilah believes (referring to Q 21: 1 and 54:1 and a hadith ) that the time of resurrection has approached ("qurb also, 'a wa-azaf al-qiydma").

Concluding from this timeline, al-Mu'ayyad bi-Ilah explains that the span between two prophets depends on the quality of the miracle provided: The more compelling it was, the longer the people believed in the prophetic mission of the one who delivered it. Al-Mu'ayyad in particular juxtaposes the miracles of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. He demonstrates that their miracles corresponded perfectly to the needs and passions of the people of their time: Moses' miracles including "the staff", "the white hand" and "the parting of the sea" simply "overwhelmed the people" ("baharah ... walu' al-nds"). Due to the extended knowl-

edge of the Israelites about sorcery (sihr) they could easily make the distinction between sorcery and a true miracle, he explains. At the time of Jesus, it was the interest in medicine (tibb) that shaped the spirit of the age. Therefore, there was no doubt that Jesus' miracles of raising the dead (ihyd' al-mawtd) and healing (lit. absolution of) the blind and leprous (ibrd' al-akmah wa-l-abras) could not be the result of a medical treatment but must have been a miracle bestowed upon him by God. Finally, Muhammad's miracle of the inimitability of the Qur'an corresponds equally to the linguistic and rhetorical superiority of the Arabs ("al-ghdya fi l-fasdha wa-l-baldgha wa-l-nihdya fi l-baydn wa-l-saldqa' y as the main feature of Muhammad's time. This is why the Arabs had no difficulty identifying the Qur'an as being different from human speech and therefore originating from God.

## Resume

Thus al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah concludes that Muhammad's Qur'anic miracle equals those of Moses and Jesus with respect to their persuasive power. The comparison focuses on the quality of their miracles with regard to their suitability to convince people of the prophet's authenticity in distinguishing between a true miracle and a false magical trick. By this he addresses a reproach raised by Ibn al-Rawandl in his *Zumurrudj* who argued that the miracles of the prophets are mere products of legerdemain, and claimed that they exploit unusual natural phenomena, such as magnetism, in order to deceive their audience. ""

In response to this reproach, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah underlines the rationality of his argumentation: The miracles functioned as proofs of prophecy, because the learned men of the addressed communities could recognise them as such against the background of all comparable phenomena and the knowledge available at the time. The Qur'an as a linguistic miracle has to cope with being compared to texts (in particular alleged imitations) of his time, just as Moses' staff miracle has to prevail against legerdemain of other would-be-prophets, and Jesus' healing the dead has to bear the comparison with the medical achievements of his time.

The comparison of the miracles of Jesus and Moses is a feature well known from the prophetological literature/ " Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah refers to earlier ShI'ite scholars *Culamd' ahl al-baytY ' ,* however, one of his sources certainly being the *Kitdb Hujaj al-nubuwwa* of the Sunnite *Mu'tazili al-Jahiz/* There, al-Jahiz has already described the idea of a history of the prophets structured along the persuasive power of their signs. " The argument that Moses, Jesus and Muhammad did miracles that corresponded to the respective leading discipline of the time and could thus be verified by the scholars furthermore appears - though in much less detail - in 'Abd al-Jabbar's *Tathbitj* his *Kitdb al-Usul al-khamsa* and *Mank-dim's Taliq*, as well as in al-Natiq's *Ziydddt* and *Siyah's Ta'liq*. It is also briefly mentioned by al-Baqillanl. " He argues (in the *Fjdz al-Qur'dn*) in this context that the challenge (*tahaddi*) is not necessary for persons skilled in the art in order to provoke an imitation.

### 5.3 Argument 2: The Transmission of the Tahaddfy/erses

The second line of argument aims at providing evidence for the existence of the tahaddi verses as the first element of the i ' }dz rationale, i.e. those verses in the Qur'an that document Muhammad's challenge of the Arabs to bring something similar to the Qur'an. Al-Mu'ayyad cites six passages of the Qur'an that contain obvious challenges (tahaddi) - Q 2: 23-24, Q 10: 73-83, Q 11: 13-14, Q 17: 88, Q 28: 49-50, Q 52: 33-34 - and adds six passages with implicit ones - Q 29: 51, Q 11: 1, Q 14: 1, Q 13: 31, Q 15: 21, Q 12: 42-43/ In his argumentation al-Mu'ayyad again relies basically on al-Jahiz, explaining that the latter had already proven that the tahaddi verses existed, and that this was compulsory knowledge ('ilm daruri). Al-Jahiz argues that, in order to count as authentic, a historical event must fulfil two prerequisites: it has to be transmitted (1) by many, diverse persons and (2) in considerable detail. The two conditions together - many transmitters and detailed information - serve as the unequivocal criteria for indisputable tradition (tawdtur) that leads to compulsory knowledge about a historical event.

This argumentation was challenged by Ibn al-Rawandi in his Kitdb al-Zu-murud, who believed that a conspiracy to a lie (al-muwtd'a fi l-khidhb) was possible among a great amount of people for diverse reasons. As an example he adduced the crucifixion of Jesus, which is reported by the Christians but denied by the Jews, while both communities were huge groups of people. This critique of Ibn al-Rawandi was discussed by generations prior to al-Mu'ayyad, which is why the latter could answer the several objections in this context with reference to earlier scholars Culamd'Y , again including al-Jahiz:

#### (1) TahaddT verses added retrospectively

The first objection says that the tahaddi verses might have been added retrospectively to the Qur'an. Al-Mu'ayyad states that his predecessors had explained that, without necessary knowledge of each of the Qur'anic verses, we would not have necessary knowledge of the Qur'an as a whole/ He adds that it would have been impossible to extend copies of the Qur'an (masdhif)j which had been written down at the time of 'Uthman, with additional verses, because the process of recording took place under the watchful eye of many tribes. These included a vast number of people who remembered the Qur'anic text by heart (huffdz) and who would have known the difference between Qur'anic and non-Qur'anic material. Al-Jahiz and al-Baqillani use the same argument. Al-Mu'ayyad adds that even ordinary Muslims who did not know the Qur'an by heart would have been able to discriminate between real and false content.

In addition, he illustrates this point with three passages that would have provoked contradiction had they not been widely known as Qur'anic recitations/ The first one is Ibn al-Mas'ud who is credited for the "two oaths" (al-ma'udhatayn), to which al-Jahiz had also referred/ Ibn al-Mas'ud is further mentioned with regards to some verses about the prayer

(al-qunut}. With this comment, al-Mu'ayyad is referring to Ibn al-Mas'ud's habit of not considering some verses he regarded as a prayer to be part of the Qur'an. Al-Mu'ayyad cites another aspect of the story that was not mentioned by al-Jahiz, namely that Ibn al-Mas'ud was an important companion of the Prophet and one of the first Muslims who played an important role in transmitting the Qur'anic text, since he heard the Qur'anic recitations directly from Muhammad. Ibn al-Mas'ud is credited with versions of the Qur'an that differed from the 'Uthmanian codex in terms of the order of the suras and some variant readings/ Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah argues that if these verses had not clearly been part of the Qur'an, the critics would have insisted on their removal.

With this detailed description of the process of transmission al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah shows that al-Jahiz's requirements for truthful transmission - many transmitters and detailed information - had indeed been fulfilled in the case of the tahaddi verses.

## (2) Complicit silence

The second objection contains the reproach of complicit silence. Al-Mu'ayyad argues that an agreed concealment (kitmdn) of the tahaddi verses would have been impossible due to the large number of transmitters and their diverse motives, which would have inevitably led to the exposure of the concealment. He lists the following motives that would have driven one or the other person to break the silence:

one's denomination and the appropriateness of his creed (li-diydnatihi wa-sadd tanqatihi)j

feeble-mindedness in religious affairs and weakness in belief (li-sakhdfat dinihi wa-du f 'aqidatihi),

confusion and amazement (tahayyuran wa-ta 'jiban)j

pride and boastfulness (iftikhdran wa-tabajjuhan)j and

the inability to keep secrets (dayyiq 'atinihi 'an hafz al-asrdr).

Al-Jahiz developed a typology of human characters according to the different dispositions (tabd'V) and shortcomings (Cilal) that create different motives for the transmission of events. He mentions, for example, envious (hdsid) and worried (wdjid) persons, preachers (walz), and a tribe including the wicked and virtuous (al-fdsid wa-l-sdlih) alike. Al-Mu'ayyad's list of possible motives or reasons for transmitting the concealment differs from the one provided by al-Jahiz, but addresses similar categories of anthropological traits. All groups share the news for different purposes, he explains. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah states that once the news was shared with even a single person, it would spread immediately. Al-Jahiz had already pointed to the inevitable impulse of people to talk about good or unusual news, and the speed of its dissemination.

Al-Mu'ayyad underlines this with two examples: first, the quick spread of the secrets of the kings (asrdr al-muluk), despite the great fear that was associated with it ; and second, the lyrics of the well-known Arab satirist al-Farazdaq (d. ca. 110/728), which are discussed by many poets interested in finding out which verses are actually attributed to him. His poetry

serves as just one example for all artistic genres/

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah concludes that under these circumstances, an agreement on a lie by a greater community - whether the result of corruption, subsequent change, oblivion or concealment - was logically impossible. He states that al-Jahiz already studied these arguments satisfactorily in his Farq (which we have already identified as having actually been his Hujaj fi tathbit al-nubuwwa). " Subsequently, al-Mu'ayyad diversifies al-Jahiz's arguments and deepens them with additional historical proof and by refuting (further) possible objections.

### (3) Agreement by a small group

The objection that a small number of three to five people could very well agree on a lie or the concealment of a secret is disproven by al-Mu'ayyad once again with reference to the historical circumstances at the time of 'Uthman, when the Qur'an was codified. He explains that - first - the Huffadz had been many. Al-Jahiz had only cited 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and Ubayy b. Ka'b to this end , while al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah lists all the following names:

'Allb. Abi Talib (d. ca. 40/661), 'Uthman b. 'Affan (d. 35/656), 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud (d. 32/652-3), 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas (d. 68/687-8), 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar al-Khattab (d. 73/693), Ubayy b. Ka'b (d. btw. 19/640 - 35/656), Zayd b. Thabit (d. 45/663-4) and 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr b. al-'As (d. 65/685), all well-known companions of the Prophet or members of the first generations of Muslims, transmitters, collectors and scholars of the Qur'an/ Second, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah notes that the habit of critical debate fostered attentiveness towards anything resembling treason in this important affair.

### (4) Verses not reaching their addressees

The next objection is likewise refuted with reference to historical data. Al-Mu'ayyad anticipates that one could object that the tahaddi verses (the majority of which are part of the long suras) might have failed to reach their addressees, the polytheists, or failed to be understood by them. He describes the length, occasions, places and audience of Muhammad's recitations, and concludes that the polytheists must have heard the respective verses, even if they did not preserve them. Furthermore, he adduces the spread of Islam in Yemen and the rest of Arabia as evidence for the spread of the Qur'an. Finally, he describes in detail the historical circumstances in Mecca and Medina during the revelation of the Qur'an, explaining that most of the tahaddi verses were recited in Mecca, when the proclamation of the faith and the recitation of the Qur'an were Muhammad's major tasks.

As evidence for the continuous debate among the polytheists about the authenticity of Muhammad, al-Mu'ayyad names al-Walid b. Mughira (d. 1/623), a wealthy local leader of a clan of the Quraysh, who opposed the Prophet and referred to the Qur'anic utterances in Q 74: 21-25 as a means of deception (sihr). Al-Mu'ayyad also recalls a debate between Ibn al-Mughira's uncle Abu Jahl (d. 2/624) and 'Utba b. Rabfa (d. 2/624), another enemy of

Muhammad who became distressed, perplexed and frightened (jar'an, dahishan, mar'uban) when he heard parts of the Qur'anic recitations, namely Q 41: 1-13, which he declared to be neither poetry nor fortune telling (laysa min al-shVr wa-kalam al-kahana fi shay'})}'

Another historical example is Umayya b. Khalaf (d. 2/624), an early opponent of Muhammad and his prophetic mission, who is credited with citing Qur'anic verses, including the tahaddi (Q 8: 31)/"

All these examples are adduced to demonstrate that the Qur'anic recitations - including the tahaddi verses - were well known even among the non-Muslims and opponents of Muhammad in Mecca. The situation in Medina is described in a similar way: The hypocrites (al-mundfiqun) and the people of the book (ahl al-kitdb) frequented the Muslims (ikhtalatu bi-l-muslimin) and were present during their reunions and prayers and therefore must have been aware of the tahaddi verses.

The refutation of the remaining objections follows the same pattern of adducing a remarkable amount of historical data as evidence for his arguments:

#### (5) Other minor objections

The claim that the tahaddi verses could have been kept secret upon the request of the Prophet himself is invalidated, on the one hand, by the repeated reference to the anthropological argument of the different motives of people. Al-Mu'ayyad underlines that the tahaddi verses had been disseminated both by those eager to augment their knowledge (mustabsir) as well as by the hypocrites (mundfiq) such as 'Abd Allah b. Abi Sarh (also known as 'Abd Allah b. Sa'd) (d. 36-7/656-8), in order to spread doubt among the believers and to slander the Prophet. On the other hand, al-Mu'ayyad refers to contradicting verses (Q 2: 159, 174; 16: 44), in which Muhammad explicitly prohibits any concealment.

(6) Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah refutes the remaining minor objection, viz. that most of the Muslims embraced Islam for reasons other than hearing the Qur'anic verses, examples include al-'Abbas b. 'Abd al-Muttalib (d. ca. 32/653), 'Umayr b. Wahab (d. 1st/7th c.), with counterexamples being 'Umar b. al-Khattab (d. 73/693), Jubayr b. Mut'im (d. 1st/7th c.), Sa'd b. Mu'adh (d. 5/627), Usayd b. Hudayr (d. after 5/627) and by explaining that this development would not have weakened the occurrence of the tahaddi verses.

(7) Finally, the reproach that the verses were not explicit enough is not regarded as a valid objection since, in the eyes of al-Mu'ayyad, the claim that "it came from God" was clear enough and did not require any further introduction to the challenge.

Having refuted all the objections mentioned, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah concludes that the tahaddi verses could not have been contrived and added later to the Qur'an, changed or misunderstood.

## Resume

The analysis of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's argument for the existence of the tahaddi verses demonstrates his effort to present a coherent, convincing account that includes an in-depth refutation of several objections. It is based on rational arguments and historically verifiable data.

The comparison of texts showed that the arguments were present in other prophetological texts. It revealed in particular strong parallels between al-Jahiz's Hujaj and the Ithbdtj relating to the overall structure as well as individual patterns of the argument. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's contribution to the question is twofold. On the one hand, he consequently applies al-Jahiz's reasoning about historical events and accurate tradition of the Qur'anic text as a whole to the tahaddi verses in particular. He draws in particular upon his reflections on indisputable tradition and adopts his conditions for gaining objective knowledge about historical events. On the other hand, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah elaborates and deepens al-Jahiz's opinions with further historical examples and the refutation of more possible objections.

## 5.4 Argument 3: Alleged Imitations of the Qur'an

### 5.4.1 Introduction

The third line of argument contains evidence that an imitation of the Qur'an never existed. It can be briefly summarised as follows: The proof (dalil) consists of the necessary link between an event and its transmission/ If there had been an imitation, it would have been transmitted ("law kdna la-nuqila"); and if it had been transmitted, we would know about it. The reverse conclusion is also true: If there is no transmission of an event, then it did not happen ("idhd thabata annahu lam yunqaly thabata annahu lam yakun"). Al-Mu'ayyad explains that, for this reasoning to be true, two conditions have to be fulfilled: (a) The event must be visible to more than three people and (b) there must be persistently strong motives for its transmission.

He argues that, in the case that an imitation of the Qur'an had existed, both conditions would have been fulfilled: (a) Its transmission would have been guaranteed by groups with a variety of motives, namely by the certifier ("al-musaddhW), who would keep it alive by speaking about it, and the denier ("al-mukaddhW), who would remember it in order to argue against it and spread doubt about it. In the last group al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah explicitly includes the mulhida and the Bdtiniyyaj "who praise it [i.e. the imitation] highly because of what [they hide] in their minds against the Prophet of God (God bless him and grant him peace)" ". (b) Furthermore, the motives for its transmission would have remained consistently strong to the present day, al-Mu'ayyad explains, because Islam persisted and the discussions about the Qur'an endured. He adds the following aspect by introducing it as "summaries" from former scholars : Both events - the revelation of the Qur'an and its alleged imitation - must have happened at the same time or immediately after each other. Therefore, the intensity of the motivation of the transmitters to convey both events must have been similar.

In fact, the impulse to convey the mu'drada must have been even stronger, as it would have served as a very powerful argument for doubt, even without the Qur'an itself.

Against this argument, the following objection - known from the prophetic literature - is raised: The mu'drada was not composed or not conveyed out of "fear of the sword and the greatness of the powerful position of Islam" ("khawf al-sayfwa-'uluw kalimat al-isldm"y . Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah explains that this statement contradicts the historical circumstances. Despite the power of Islam, unhindered opposition against Muhammad and Islam always accompanied its development and critical writings were not prevented from being circulated.

He cites various examples from all historical periods, beginning with the Umayyad era: Yazid b. Mu'awiyah (d. 61/680), the second Umayyad caliph (r. 60-4/680-3), under whom the Prophet's grandson al-Husayn was killed, openly circulated his verses, which he pronounced on the occasion of receiving the head of al-Husayn and in which he threatened to take revenge on the prophet Ahmad (i.e. Muhammad) for his deeds. Another opponent was al-Walid (II) b. Yazid b. Abd al-Malik b. Marwan (d. 126/744), the Umayyad caliph between 125-6/743-4, who mocked himself about the threats of God against the oppressor *ijabbar*) and burned the Qur'an, saying: "When you come to your Lord on the Day of Resurrection, say: 'O Lord, al-Walid burned me.' (Idha mdjVta rabbaka yawm hashr, fa-qul: ya rabb haraqani al-Walid.)" For the end of the Umayyad and the beginning of the 'Abbasid era al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah cites Ibn al-Muqaffa' as testimony for unhindered opposition to Islam. During the days of the seventh Abbasid ruler al-Ma'mun (r. 198-213/813-833), Ibn al-Rawandi is mentioned for his argument. Ibn al-Rawandi was discussed for his heretical writings (as we have seen above). Ibn al-Muqaffa' is discussed for his alleged imitation of the Qur'an (as we will see below).

'Abd al-Jabbar blows in the same horn when he states that, at the time of the 'Abbasids, the Muslims were strong but that nonetheless "dispraise of divinity and the abuse and the denial of the prophets" ("al-ta'nfi l-rabbiibiyya wa-shatm al-anbiyd' wa-takdhibihim") continued through Ibn al-Rawandi and others like him. 'Abd al-Jabbar explicitly adds the Qaramita to this list/ As a conclusion, al-Mu'ayyad asserts that, despite the growing strength of Islam, harsh criticism from various sides spread without hindrance at all times. Further examples of such obvious opposition are three authors of alleged imitations of the Qur'an, whose productions are discussed in greater detail: Musaylima, Tulayha al-Asadi and Ibn al-Muqaffa'.

#### 5.4.2 Musaylima

##### The Historical Figure of Musaylima

The first example of an alleged imitation of the Qur'an is well known in the Islamic literature as Musaylima al-Kadhdhdb ("Musaylima, the Liar"). Musaylima b. Habib b. Thumama came from the Hanifa tribe of al-Yamama, southeast of Medina, where he led a political movement after the death of the tribe leader



Hawdha b. 'All (d. 8/630). Historical reports mention mutual exchanges of emissaries and fights between Musaylima and his adherents in Yamama and Muhammad and his community in Medina. Musaylima was ultimately killed in the battle of 'Aqraba' after the death of the Prophet Muhammad under the command of Abu Bakr by Khalid b. al-Walid.

Musaylima is considered a so-called "false prophet" because he claimed to be a prophet and to have received a revelation from God through the angel Gabriel. Musaylima's tricks or miracles are not mentioned in al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's argument, nor does he provide detailed information about his life or his relationship to Muhammad. Musaylima is merely discussed with reference to his claim of having received messages from God and recited them publicly. Musaylima's utterances were composed in rhythmic prose (sa;'), similar to early Qur'an suras. References to these recitations are also found in the literary tradition, Qur'anic commentaries, historical compendia and biographies of the Prophet, one of the earliest being the Sira of Ibn Ishaq (d. 150/767) in the recension of Ibn Hisham (d. 213/828 or 218/834). " Over the centuries, Musaylima became the subject of ridicule and contempt and the cited fragments of his recitations were constantly changed. "

#### Musaylima's Recitations in the Ithbat

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah cites four fragments of Musaylima's rhymed prose, which I discuss under the following headings: "night" (al-layl), "frog" (difdV) "town-dwellers" (al-madariydt) and "pregnant woman" (al-hubla). It is interesting to note that Musaylima's verses were not discussed in the prophetological texts by 'Abd al-Jabbar, Mankdim, al-Natiq and Siyah. Musaylima is at most discussed as an example of false prophets and possessors of false signs. However, his recitations were used by some of the above-mentioned contemporary authors, who aimed at establishing the Vjdz al-Qufdn on a literary basis, namely al-Khattabi in his Baydn Vjdz al-QuT'dn "\*" and al-Baqillani, who used the verses in question in his Fjdzal-Qur'dn and (supposedly) his Intisdr li-naql al-Qur'dn . Similar fragments are cited by the historian Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/923), who might be the source of the later authors. " The collector and critic of Arabic literature Abu Mansur 'Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad al-Tha'alibi (b. 350/961, d. 429/1038) cites similar fragments in his Thimdr al-qulub fl l-muddf wa-l-mansub and could likewise be a source. " The following tables contain the four fragments of the Ithbat in comparison to Tabari's, Khattabi's and Baqillani's citations. "

Kister contextualised these verses as follows: In Yamama, Musaylima was supported by several tribal groups. He had established a safe area (haram) which was guarded by the Banu Usayyid. They were accused of being corrupt and mistreating other groups. In response to their complaints, Musaylima read the following verses from his Qur'an: "(I swear) by the dark night and by the black wolf and the never ending age (?) (al-juz' al-azlam), the Usayyid did not violate [the sanctity of] the haramJ" When their transgressions continued, he recited another

verse: "[I swear] by the dark night and by the softly treading lion, the Usayyid cut neither fresh nor dry." "

Al-Baqillanl's Pjaz and al-Tabari bear the greatest resemblance to the Ithbdtj containing only minor variations in a few words, possibly the result of a misreading.

The verses of the second example ("frog") cited in the Ithbdt correspond exactly to those cited by al-Baqillanl in his Pjaz al-Qur'an whereas in the Nukatj only the first phrase of the passage is cited (with a variation). The last two lines of the verse appear only in al-Baqillanl's Pjaz and al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's Ithbdt. Al-Tabari also cites the lines but does not attribute them to Musaylima's recitation, but rather to his letter to Muhammad, in which Musaylima proposed Muhammad a deal to divide the land between them.

The passage of the third example "town-dwellers" is also cited by al-Baqillani in its entirety in his Pjaz and in partial form in the Nukat. It also appears in Tabari's Ta'rikh. The different versions contain minor variations and some additions. Regarding the chronology, it seems possible that Tabari was the source for either al-Baqillani or al-Mu'ayyad (or both). However, on this meager basis a judgement on dependencies is impossible.

The first three examples are not analysed in further detail by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah. He considers their weakness to be self-explanatory. Al-Mu'ayyad ends his presentation of Musaylima with a last utterance: example 4 ("pregnant woman").

The "pregnant women" verses are cited in the Sira of Ibn Ishaq, which may be the original source for all later authors, as Al-Makin suggests. The second line is only cited in the Sira and the Ithbat with an exchange of Ibn Ishaq's "an 'ama" by "manna" both of which mean "to grant". The last line appears only in Ibn Ishaq's and al-Tabari's versions, while the latter cites the former as his source, where it reads: "and allowed them [to drink] wine and [to commit] adultery (wa-ahalla lahum [i.e. li-l-muslimm] al-khamarwa-l-zindy\ Except by al-Mu'ayyad, the phrase is not quoted as part of Musaylima's utterances in either text, but rather as a comment from the authors on his teachings. Al-Makin suggests that al-Mu'ayyad inserted this (shortened) line with its shameful attribution to God into Musaylima's verses to further discredit him. It is also possible that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah either did not distinguish between Ibn Ishaq's comment and the verses of Musaylima or that he had a different source at his disposal, where the distinction was not indicated. Again, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's version somewhat corresponds to al-Baqillanl's Pjaz. The difference is that the second and final lines are missing from al-Baqillanl's version. "

A remarkable parallel between the Ithbdt and the Nukat is the explanation for the "pregnant woman" verse. Both texts identify a Qur'anic expression introduced by Musaylima in order to embellish his own utterances, viz. Q105:1 ("Alam

tara kayfafa 'ala rabbuka bi-ashdb al-fU"). Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah adds Q 3:164 ("la-qad manna Allah 'aid al-mu'minm"). He explains that this technique of using Qur'anic expressions in a modified way was common among poets and writers, without being seen as an imitation.

In sum, it seems that the differences among the versions result from the disqualifying intention behind the presentation of the verses. The verses were quoted as evidence for the falsity of Musaylima's prophetic claim. We observe important similarities between al-Mu'ayyad and al-Baqillani, which include not only the examples cited, their order (Fjdz al-Qur'dn) and wording, but also the way they are compared to Qur'anic expressions (Nukat). Even the diction of the two authors is similar:

"And these paragraphs are of most obvious foolishness (sakhafa) and most clear weakness (rakaka)

"... everyone of the masters of the Arabic language will attest that this is of the most foolish and weak speech (min sakhif al-kalbm wa-rakikihi)."

Given these similarities, a link between al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's Ithbdtj the Fjaz al-Qufdn by al-Baqillani and the Nukat of his student, respectively al-Baqillani's Intisdr seems obvious. A common source is also an option.

#### Musaylima in the Argument for Tjaz al-Qur'an

The similarities between the authors mentioned are also evident in the overall use of Musaylima for the argument of Vjdz al-Qufdn. To disprove the claim that there was an imitation of the Qur'an, al-Khattabi, al-Baqillmi and al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah cite the verses of Musaylima and underline their uselessness and inferior linguistic quality. Al-Jahiz had already described Musaylima in a similarly negative manner as someone who possessed none of the qualities of a poet, rhyme-maker, soothsayer and foreteller. Moreover, al-Khattabi, al-Baqillani and al-Mu'ayyad expose Musaylima's technique of introducing Qur'anic expressions from different contexts into his own speech in order to enhance it, as is evident in the "pregnant woman" example. This serves as additional evidence of the Qur'an's distinction from human speech, since without the Qur'anic ornaments Musaylima's speech would not have been regarded as something extraordinary.

In this context, Abu Bakr is often cited as an authority to support their negative assessment of the material. It is reported that Abu Bakr, upon hearing the utterances of Musaylima, declared: "Truly, [this] speech is not coming from God!" (... innahu kalbm Id yakhruj min ildh) as al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah puts it. Al-Baqillani and al-Khattabi add similar statements of Abu Bakr.

There is another parallel between al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah and al-Baqillani (according to the Nukat) that merits attention. Initially, the two theologians operate within the framework of criticising Musaylima's verses as a mu'dradat al-Qufdn: The uselessness of Musaylima's pronouncements and his technique of using Qur'anic expressions should discredit the claim of having imitated the Qur'an. But then they shift the argument in another direction and emphasise that Musaylima had, in fact, not at all pretended to create an imitation of the Qur'an of Muhammad , but that he himself, just like Muhammad, had received

revelations from God. He considered his verses as a revelation "sent down from God" ("munazzal min Ind Allah\*"). This corresponds, incidentally, to the explanations offered by historians. They report that Musaylima claimed to share the prophetic mission with Muhammad and neither denied it to him nor aimed to discredit him with an imitation of his Qur'an. Al-Baqillani and al-Mu'ayyad explain that, even if the verses of Musaylima had been sent down from God, their divine origin would not have been enough to qualify this as a miracle (mu'jiza). Other revelations or "down-sents" from God, namely the Torah (al-Tawrdt) and the Gospel (al-InjUj) are not considered miracles either ("humd ghayr mu'jizun"). Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah - in contrast to al-Baqillani - adds "the Book of Psalms of David" (al-Zabur) in this context and phrases it even more explicitly, explaining that inimitability (Vjdz) had not been established for these books, since coming from God is not the only required characteristic for Vjdz al-Qur'dn. Additional attributes were needed. "

If we look at the short citations of Musaylima in the context of the different texts, we notice a development in the way they are used. In the earlier historical accounts of Ibn Ishaq and al-Tabari, they were merely presented in order to criticise Musaylima's use of rhymed prose in conjunction with his claim of being a prophet and to discredit this claim. Al-Makin argued that Musaylima's utterances were first used to support the argument of the i'jdz doctrine as early as the time of al-Jahiz, yet that he may have even been the first one to use the verses of Musaylima to demonstrate the superiority of the language of the Qur'an. It is true that al-Jahiz was one of the early authors who played a role in the formulation of the Vjdz miracle. But, at least in his extant works, he does not provide a detailed comparison of Musaylima's verses to the Qur'an. In the prophetological writings of 'Abd al-Jabbar and the recensions of Ibn Khallad's Kitdb al-Usul Musaylima's verses were not discussed either. Only when the debate about the Vjdz-theory started to focus on the linguistic superiority of the Qur'an did the utterances of the "false prophet" start to be discussed as a possible imitation of the Qur'an. Only the later authors al-Khattabi, al-Baqillani and al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah who emphasise the differences between "the weird utterances" of Musaylima, composed in odd sa\ and the clear utterances of God revealed in the Qur'an, thereby making an explicit connection between the analysis of Musaylima's verses and the doctrine of Vjdz. As we have seen, al-Baqillani and al-Mu'ayyad took this argument even one step further by highlighting the linguistic superiority of the Qur'an not only to human speech, but also other examples of divine Scripture.

#### 5.4.3 Tulayha al-Asadi

##### The Historical Figure of Tulayha

Tulayha al-Asadi is the second example discussed within the framework of alleged imitations of the Qur'an. In the literature he is often listed along with Musaylima among the "false prophets". Tulayha b. Khuwaylid b. Nawfal from the Asad tribe, in the northwest of the Arabian Peninsula, was a clan leader who opposed Muhammad and his supporters during Muhammad's lifetime and the so-called

rida wars. Some sources report that he was defeated under Abu Bakr in 11/632 and finally joined the Muslim community under 'Umar. Very little additional information is available about him.

Tulaylia in the Ithbat

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah cites only one single recitation of Tulayha:

"What does it make to God that you dust your cheeks and show your backside openly? Remember God chastely and standing [upright].  
(Md yaf'alu Allah bi-ta'fir khududikum wa-fath adbarikum. Udhkuru Allah a'iffatan qiydman.)"

Al-Mu'ayyad analyses the expressions that Tulayha borrowed from the Qur'an, namely Q 4:147 ("md yafalu Allah bi-'adhdhikum"), Q 3:191 ("yadhkuruna Allah qiydman wa-qu'udarC") and Q 33, 41 ("adhkuru Allah dhikran kathiran") in order to embellish his speech in the same way as Musaylima. But he concludes that it is impossible to determine the quality of speech and speaker on the basis of these short lines, just as Vjdz could not be identified on such a meagre basis.

The same observation as with the verses of Musaylima applies to the verses of Tulayha, namely that they do not appear in the prophetological writings of the Mu'tazili-Zaydi tradition. They are also not discussed by al-Rummani, al-Ba-qillani or al-Khattabi.

#### 5.4.4 Ibn al-Muqaffa'

The Historical Figure of ibn al-Muqaffa'

The third example of alleged imitations of the Qur'an is Ibn al-Muqaffa'. Ibn al-Muqaffa' (b. ca. 102/720, d. ca. 139/756) became known to posterity by the name of 'Abd Allah after he later embraced Islam. His kunyay "son of al-Muqaffa'", refers back to "the crippled" fingers of his father, which were a result of torture. While he also travelled to Kirman and Kufa, he spent most of his life in Basra, where he frequented literary circles and served as a secretary to an uncle of the second 'Abbasid caliph al-Mansur (r. 136-158/754-775). With his numerous translations and original works he contributed extensively to the transmission of Indian and Persian history and culture into Arabic-Islamic civilisation and has been described as an excellent rhetorician (fi nihdyat al-fasdha wa-l-baldgha). His religious identity, however, is rather obscure. In the sources he is often grouped among the zindiq and labelled as a Zoroastrian, Sceptic or Manichaean. Ansari thinks that Ibn al-Muqaffa' might well have been a zindiq in the broader sense of the word, meaning the refusal of religion and religious obligations, but he suspects the other accusations, especially that of being a follower of MM, to

be false, later attributions.

ibn al-Muqaffa's "Mu'aradat al-Qur'an" in the Ithbat

Ibn al-Muqaffa's fragments preserved in the Ithbat are a unique example of his so-called mu'dradat al-Qur'an in which he targets the Qur'anic text and parodies its linguistic style. 'Abd al-Jabbar, in his Tathbit dald'il al-nubuwwa, and al-Baqillanl, in his Pjaz al-Qur'drij refer to Ibn al-Muqaffa' without mentioning his mu'drada} " Both authors introduce Ibn al-Muqaffa's collections of Persian wisdom literature in a discussion about similarities with the Qur'an (and Hadith) mainly in content and both deny a similarity. Al-Baqillanl says explicitly that he does not know of any book in which or through which Ibn al-Muqaffa' imitated the Qur'an. Therefore, Josef van Ess describes the fact that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah not only mentions the mu 'drada, but also provides quotations of it, as "something new, almost a sensation" "" . Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah classifies Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the same category as Musaylima and Tulayha, namely as one of those who enriched their texts with bits and pieces of the Qur'an. However, he also says that the text of Ibn al-Muqaffa' was of higher quality than the utterances of Musaylima and Tulayha: While al-Mu'ayyad considers their recitations to be obvious non sense and easy to comprehend even for ordinary people, he was familiar with the compelling character of Ibn al-Muqaffa's verses, which seem to have been widely read. He expresses his preoccupation as follows: "I have seen many uneducated people who started to have doubts (... yudakhilun MM al-shubha 'aid anfusiMmy about the Qur'an and its inimitability due to these verses. "" For this reason, he dedicates a longer discussion to them. The fragments of Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the Ithbdt were first discovered by Madelung and later studied by van Ess. "" A recent edition (based on three manuscripts), translation into French and short analysis are provided by Istvan Kristo-Nagy. ""

In his study, van Ess demonstrates that Ibn al-Muqaffa' imitated and parodied the Qur'anic style by combining Qur'anic wording with foreign formulas and unusual expressions in order to "demonstrate that Qur'anic material can be rearranged with a similar effect under a new prose rhyme" "" . Van Ess points to the fact that the rhymed prose is a decisive element in this context. Sa}\ which had been used in the Meccan suras of the Qur'an, was quite unusual at the time of Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the first half of the 2nd/8th century. Although, strictly speaking, an Vjdz dogma did not yet exist, van Ess assumes that the superiority of the Qur'anic language was already widely accepted, particularly among Arabs. Ibn al-Muqaffa', a Persian who was conscious of his linguistic talent, may have been reacting against this.

ibn al-Muqaffa' in the Argument for Tjaz al-Qur'an

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's main reason for presenting Ibn al-Muqaffa's passages is the latter's implicit literary critique of the Vjdz. Ibn al-Muqaffa's intention becomes clear in the last cited fragment:

"There remains [no other possibility than] that both texts (al-kalamayn, i.e. the Qur'an and its parody) are in the same position so that the dogma (al-VtiqM) cannot make any differ

entiation in value between them by estimating one of them highly while considering the other one of low standard. Consequently, one should recite one of them as frequently as the other and consider its formulations equally agreeable and linguistically correct as those of the other. For it is by acquaintance that people find recited [texts] (al-matluww) agreeable and enjoy eating, drinking, and cohabitation, and it is by displeasure and lack of experience that they are deterred from it and keep away from what is right. The throat should be exercised by [the recitation] of this [text] as by anything else."

This short passage indicates that Ibn al-Muqaffa' competed with the Qur'an in terms of its linguistic quality. In his opinion, the privilege and veneration of the Qur'an is merely a result of familiarisation. From this perspective, basically any text of high linguistic quality would have the potential to achieve the status of the Qur'an. He underpins his claim with an anthropological argument, namely that people generally prefer the familiar to the unknown.

Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah refutes this objection with two arguments. "First, he declares it to be a ridiculous notion (al-tabassum) and a shortcoming of intellect and knowledge ('al-istiskhdf li-'aqlihi wa-ma'rifatih) to forbid a qualifying distinction between two texts that are equal in style but not in content, as the verses by Ibn al-Muqaffa' intend. If this was the case, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah argues, one would prefer the more familiar poems of al-Khuzaymī to those of Imru' al-Qays. Second, he explains that Ibn al-Muqaffa's claim ignores or pretends to ignore human habits ('jdhil bi-Waddat aw mutajdhir), which in reality reveal the opposite of what Ibn al-Muqaffa' claimed, namely that boredom and tedium (al-maldl and al-sd'm) always push people to something new. Be it in their diet or in the rules of marriage, taking pleasure in the new (al-istildhddh li-l-jadid) is a general characteristic of human behaviour. When it comes to Qur'anic recitation, however, people say that it never gets boring, no matter how often one repeats it, which supports its distinction from all other speech, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah insists. When asked how ordinary people could make the distinction between the Qur'an and Ibn al-Muqaffa', al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah explains that if through indisputable tradition people know that the Arabs, the masters of language, did not bring something similar to the Qur'an, they knew immediately about the disability of all other people, including the Persians. With this remark al-Mu'ayyad probably refers to Ibn al-Muqaffa's Persian origin and once again confirms that his speech, as a matter of fact, did not imitate the Qur'an.

#### 5.4.5 Summary: Pseudo-Qur'ans in the Argument for rjaz al-Qur'an

We can summarise al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's argument of Chapter 1.2 in three points: First, he proves in detail that the three texts labelled imitations of the Qur'an do not merit this description. Second, he concludes that the existence of these verses demonstrates that heretical scripture was not prevented from being circulated, which would have also been the case for a real imitation. The nonexistence of such a record provides evidence for the nonexistence of an imitation. Finally, the

discussion of the different examples and their weaknesses pointed to the different requirements for the Vjdz doctrine. From this point of view, Musaylima and Tulayha are not considered serious challenges because their verses fail in both content and style. Their only notable characteristic is the In contrast, the discussion of Ibn al-Muqaffa' is a question of substance since his verses are of high linguistic quality, despite their lacking of an appropriate message. With his analysis, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah anticipates what he explains at length in Chapters 1.5 to 1.6 of the Ithbdtj namely that the superiority of the Qur'an relates not only to its form, but also to its content. Both qualities are indispensable to al-Mu'ayyad's construction of the i 'jdz dogma.

Comparison to relevant examples of the prophetological literature demonstrated that the non-existence of imitations of the Qur'an was part of the central argumentation for Vjdz al-Qur'dn. However, a detailed linguistic analysis of such (alleged) imitations of the Qur'an (viz. the one by Musaylima) is provided only by authors who underline the linguistic rationale of the Vjdz theory, namely al-Khattabi, al-Baqillani and al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah. Tulayha and Ibn al-Muqaffa's verses are even a unique addition by al-Mu'ayyad. This underlines his use of a variety of sources, not limited to the Mu'tazili-Zaydi tradition, but also drawing from a rich literary heritage. Al-Mu'ayyad's way of reasoning, namely the detailed discussion of potential counterarguments, emphasises his effort to present a coherent, detailed rationale of all steps of the Tja -dogma.

In the wider context of his anti-Isma'ili ambitions, it is worth noting that the discussion about the Pseudo-Qur'ans is implicitly directed toward the teaching of the hdtin, because it underlines the specific value of the exoteric aspect of the Qur'an. The wording of the Qur'an is the opposite of a trivial matter, but essential for the proof of the Vjdz miracle that requires a debate based on rational, linguistic criteria, such as the comparison of texts as provided by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The analysis of the three individual lines of arguments that serve to support the provability of the Vjdz al-Qufdn as Muhammad's core miracle underlines al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's effort to put the proof of Muhammad's prophecy on a solid, rational basis: The history of prophets and the comparison of their signs, the argument of the truthful transmission of the tahaddi verses, and the pseudo-imitations underlines the rationality of the Vjdz doctrine in all its aspects. Al-Mu'ayyad thus provides a cogent proof that is able to refute various critical objections on the part of the enemies of Islam: the false prophets Musaylima and Tulayha, the Qur'an-imitator Ibn al-Muqaffa' and the mulhid Ibn al-Rawandi.

It became apparent that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah is drawing from the rich tradition of Islamic theology and uses the well-established arguments. One of his most important sources, and the only one he cites explicitly (except Ibn al-Rawandi), is the early Mu'tazili al-Jahiz. As the analysis of the citations of al-Jahiz and Ibn



al-Rawandi (transmitted through later references) and the other texts mentioned revealed, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah was familiar with the prophetological literature and used it for the composition of his *Ithbdt nubuwwat al-nabi*. The contribution of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah is that he further strengthens and diversifies the existing arguments with the refutation of new objections and additional examples. He also promotes the literary argumentation of *Vjdz al-Qufdn* based on a meticulous analysis of the Qur'anic language and a detailed text comparison with other literary works and, therefore, appears to be at the height of the debate, since this perspective was mainly promoted by contemporary writers. He makes use of everything that he has at his disposal, viz. anthropological observations, historical data and linguistic analysis, in order to demonstrate in detail how the *i 'jdz* dogma satisfies rational criteria.

Since the beginnings of Islamic theology, prophetology has been a central topic of discussion. The early generations of Mu'tazili theologians, including al-Jahiz, the two Jubba'Is and Ibn Khallad, developed the basic prophetological doctrines. They responded to the critiques of Muhammad and the Qur'an expressed by the *mulhida*, in particular their most prominent representative, Ibn al-Rawandi. However, while the refutation of Ibn al-Rawandi marked the debates of the 3rd/9th century, prophetology was still a matter of vital concern in the 4th/10th century. Martin notes that

"Prima facie there would seem to be little reason for this. Insofar as proper names of groups and individuals occur in the later writings at all, they belong to foes long since dead, such as Ibn al-Rawandi. The dilemma raised by the so-called Brahmins had been dealt with in the writings of the Two Masters and others decades earlier."

He therefore asks:

"Who, then, were the enemies of the doctrine of prophethood in the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries?"

It seems plausible that the threat posed by the Isma'ili propaganda and their concept of prophecy and prophetic law is one reason for the continuous interest of the *mutakallimun* in prophetological debates. The *Ithbdt* suggests such a reading. The arguments developed as rebuttal to the *mulhida* in the 3rd/9th century served as a blueprint for the refutation of the *mulhida* of the 4th/10th century, the *Isma'iliyya*.

## VI Conclusion

The *Kitdb Ithbdt nubuwwat al-nabi* by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah contains two frames of

arguments: a refutation of the Isma'iliyya and a proof of Muhammad's prophecy. The presentation of the historical background shows that the Isma'ilis succeeded not only politically by establishing the Fatimid state in North Africa and the Qarmatī state in Bahrayn; with their missionary propaganda they also successfully converted important regional leaders in Persia and beyond. In Tabaristan, the domain of al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah, by the 4th/10th century, Isma'ili influence had grown considerably, and the established religious powers now perceived the increasing Isma'ili presence as a dangerous threat. As an act of defence authors of various denominations composed refutations against the Isma'iliyya in a more or less polemical style, as the overview of anti-Isma'ili works demonstrates. In his *Kitdb Ithbdt nubuwwat al-nabi*, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah refers to four authors of such earlier refutations, whose works are all lost, except for that by Ibn Rizam, which has partly survived through later references. A comparison of these citations shows that Ibn Rizam's refutation is a polemical work that mainly described the alleged origins of Isma'ilism and the early development of the group. Al-Mu'ayyad refers to another text that served the anti-Isma'ili purpose: the *Kitdb al-Baldgha*. This forgery of an Isma'ili text has also been lost, but it did survive in various later citations, with which al-Mu'ayyad seemed to be acquainted. He makes use of such polemical writings and repeats some of the widespread stereotypes about the Isma'iliyya such as the permission of wine consumption or the omission of prayers, though he does not further develop on these texts.

Instead the Zaydi imam provides a critical statement of important notions of Isma'ili theology or what he considers to be Isma'ili teachings, including the negation of God, the negation of prophecy, the abolishment of religious law, and the denial of resurrection. In line with his predecessors and colleagues, he identifies the Isma'iliyya as the new enemies of Islam. In order to underline their heretical character, al-Mu'ayyad equates the Isma'iliyya with the enemies of Islam in former times: the false prophets Musaylima and Tulayha at the time of Muhammad, the mulhid Ibn al-Muqaffa' of the Umayyad and the beginning of the 'Abbasid era, and first and foremost the arch-heretic Ibn al-Rawandi, who was active during 'Abbasid times. The critical books of Ibn al-Rawandi cited can be read as mirroring the reproaches directed toward the Isma'iliyya. In the *Kitdb al-Tdjj* Ibn al-Rawandi denies the createdness of the world and God the creator. His *Kitdb al-Zumurrud* is a fundamental attack on prophecy in general and of the prophethood of Muhammad in particular. Finally, the *Kitdb al-Ddmigh* and the *Kitdb al-Farid* target the miracle of the inimitability of the Qur'anic text as evidence for Muhammad. These criticisms correspond in some respects to those addressed toward the Isma'iliyya in the Introduction even if this parallel is not explicitly drawn by al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah himself.

An analysis of the individual criticisms against the background of authentic Isma'ili texts indicates that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah had a clear opinion about the relevant aspects of Isma'ili theology and their inherent ability to threaten Islam. A comparison with other refutations of the Isma'iliyya, in particular Abu l-Qasim al-Bustf's *Min kashfAsrdr al-Bdtiniyya wa-'Awdr madhhabihini* and the anti-Isma'ili passages in al-Hakim al-Jishumī's *Shark 'Uyīn al-masd'il* and Ibn al-Malahimī's *Tuhfat al-mutakaUimin fi l-radd 'aid l-faldsifa* as well as his *Kitdb al-Mu 'tamadfi usul al-din* suggest that these Zaydi-Mu'tazili thinkers were con

cerned with similar features of Isma'ili theology. Reading between the lines leads to the assumption that the Zaydi imam, in fact, criticised Isma'ili concepts for their suprarational character: (1) The notion of God based on the double negation of all characteristics and conceptions and the validity of two opposites is considered as transcending the human realm of language and mental perception. (2) The Isma'ili concept of prophets and revelation understood as divine inspiration through direct access to the Intellect is considered to contradict the concept of prophets and revelation based on rational proofs and irrefutable transmission. (3) Finally, the concept of a religious law, whose inner meanings can be understood only by infallible imams and which cannot be verified on the basis of precise linguistic analysis, is in contrast with a notion of Scripture that not only provides definite religious instruction for the believer, but also contains the main evidence for the truthfulness of the prophet. Thus, it appears that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah perceived the suprarational interpretation of these three fundamental Islamic concepts to be intellectual challenges to rational theology and Islam as a rationally justifiable religion. This alone makes the *Ithbdt* worthy of notice, because it sheds some light on the question why the Isma'iliyya was considered to be so dangerous. In addition to the quick spread and remarkable political success of the Isma'ili movement, viz. it was the Isma'ili teachings that taught other Islamic denominations the meaning of fear.

In response to the Isma'ili threat, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah eventually decided not to compose another *Radd 'aid l-Ismd Viyya* in the style of the authors cited, but he rather contrasts the Isma'ili suprarational doctrines with a thorough rational proof of prophecy: *Ithbdt nubuwwat al-nabl*. The analysis of some exemplarily selected arguments leads to the conclusion that al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah generally did not present original ideas. But rather he availed himself of a standard set of arguments, that has been formulated to some extent in response to the *mulhida* of the 3rd/9th century, most importantly to Ibn al-Rawandi. In refutation of his fundamental objections, the prophetological arguments were refined and developed into a set of well-established rational proofs available to anyone with doubts. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's sources comprise standard works of the Mu'tazili tradition of *kaldm* texts, which were continued in Zaydi scholarship, as the presentation of the relevant texts suggests. In addition, al-Mu'ayyad uses similar material as contemporary scholars with linguistic expertise, such as the Ash'ari theologian Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, who turned to establishing a linguistic rationale of the *Vjaz*. Al-Mu'ayyad's particular merit lies in his extending the known arguments by discussing additional objections and adding more examples. For this purpose, he utilises the whole historical and linguistic heritage, with which he was well acquainted, as the overview of his oeuvre illustrates. With these rational instruments the Zaydi theologian hopes to deliver a persuasive answer to the doubts raised by the Isma'ili propaganda. Al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah's text is thus an important contribution in the history of rational theology and its contention with competing systems of religious thought.

The study suggests that the continuing preoccupation with prophetology by rational theologians of the 4th/10th century was a result of the ideological struggle with Isma'ilism. In order to further investigate these intersectarian influences, it seems worthwhile to figure out if and in which way Isma'ili theology, in particu

lar the teaching of the hdtin, provoked or at least fostered the developement of the linguistic rationale of i 'jdz, that was mainly developed during this century. In this endeavour, the corpus of texts should not be limited on classical polemics and refutations, but include apologetic writings in general. They have to be read with possible intentions of refutation in mind in order to be fruitful for future research on the intellectual relationship between Zaydiyya and Isma'iliyya.